







## DAWN IN SIBERIA





# DAWN IN SIBERIA THE MONGOLS OF LAKE BAIKAL

*by*

G. D. R. PHILLIPS

*FOREWORD BY*

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## FOREWORD

IT IS A PLEASURE to find the political and economic doctrines to which one has pinned one's faith justified in their practical application; and this book, whilst it commands any reader's interest on its merits as a vivid and dramatic story, does at the same time demonstrate the truth of one of the more humanly important of Socialist arguments.

We who repudiate capitalism have always contended that the doctrines of racial superiority so firmly held by colonising rulers—with incidental advantages in the form of cheap labour supply—are without foundation, and that when Socialist economics and initiative are applied by and to "native" peoples hitherto condemned to a miserable standard of living as hewers of wood and drawers of water (for drawers of dividends), it will be proved that they are as fully capable of intellectual, artistic and economic development as the so-called master races.

Whilst we must wait a little while to see these contentions vindicated in the colonial territories of the capitalist world, the "native races" or national minorities which are to be found in such numbers and varieties in the U.S.S.R. are already reaping the benefit of this humane doctrine; and in *Dawn in Siberia* we have a clear picture of one typical development in what was a small and remote tsarist colony, Buryat-Mongolia.

Here we see a colonial people suffering every disadvantage of illiteracy, backwardness, poverty and disease, and the added complications of a wide plantation of the colonising "master race"; and we see how this race and the "planted" Russians have together taken their Socialist opportunity and

made their way through difficulties, disappointments and treacheries, to security, to a free and rapid development of their own cultures, and to industrial and agricultural prosperity. They have been neither neglected nor "Russified"; they have stood on their own feet and grown in stature; they are still the Mongols and the Russians of Lake Baikal, using merely new tools—Socialist tools—to build their new life.

We can learn two lessons from this book. One is tragic: it is the lesson of the infinite waste of human happiness that comes from keeping "colonial" peoples backward. The other is fine and hopeful and glorious; it shows how millions of people can rise into richer and fuller life. The prospects offered by Socialism in this field may be likened to those which the release of atomic energy offers in the scientific field.

D. N. PRITT, K.C., M.P.

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*Maps by Alfred E. Taylor*

## INTRODUCTION

AT THE CORNER of the street was an ice-cream kiosk, and two young men and a young woman stood by it eating ice-cream sandwiches in the broiling sun. They were all three Mongols, but dressed in Western clothes: the young men in shirt and trousers, but no jacket, and the girl in white blouse and plain blue skirt, white ankle-socks and sports shoes. As they ate they talked animatedly in Buryat-Mongolian. Their yellow-brown faces had gleaming skins, their eyes were bright, their black hair glistened in the sun. They held themselves erect.

Near them on one side was an old log-house, with a courtyard the carved double gates of which had a curved Chinese roof over them. It was dirty and decrepit. On their other side, fifty yards or more away across a sandy terrace, stood a great concrete building four storeys high with a central tower, all gleaming with great glass windows.

Down the dusty, sandy street came a motor-bus, and stopped. A crowd of Mongols got out of it, dressed mostly in Mongol clothes: a long coat fastened over one shoulder, a conical hat with a tassel and a fur brim, high boots. They walked, chattering, across the terrace to the great concrete building and disappeared within.

These were citizens of the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The town was its capital, Ulan-Udé—"Red Udé"—formerly called by the Russian name of Verkhne-Udinsk. The concrete building was the House of Parliament and Government.

In the "prelude" to his great work *Genghis Khan* the late Ralph Fox described how he watched a Mongol stumbling in rags along a railway line in winter. "This was a man with



nothing, neither horse, nor wife, nor tent, nothing but a bare spark of life that forced those short arched legs from place to place in accordance with some deep instinct of his nomad consciousness. He could endure, but it would be too much to say he suffered. Yes, above all he could endure. In that bare and frozen steppe, where nothing grew, whence the tents had disappeared in the autumn migrations and only a few mud huts remained by river and lake, he was able to live still, though he could neither see, nor feel, nor understand, only move."

I have chosen a different picture as the starting-point of this book: my first glance round Socialist Buryat-Mongolia a few minutes after I stepped off the train from Moscow. I could have found old Mongols such as the man described by Fox: old, dirty, tattered, disease-ridden, dumb and without understanding. But for modern Buryatia such men would not be representative. The young, healthy men and women, the peasants coming in by bus from some outlying Buryat village, these far more truly represent modern Buryatia as does their concrete government building.

The contrast between them and Fox's Mongol is complete. All the travellers' descriptions of the Mongols and their life are hopelessly out of date in Buryatia, as indeed they are becoming also across the Soviet Union's southern frontier in the independent Mongolian People's Republic. And it is perhaps that first glance at the country, that sharp contrast with all preconceived ideas, that is the original motive for this book.

Strategically and economically Buryatia has of recent years become of great importance. It is one of the pivotal points around which the nations and social movements of Asia are at present revolving.

Yet this book sets out to describe the history of the Buryats not merely of this century, but during earlier centuries when they were only a small, unknown, semi-barbarian people,

much like the American Red Indians of a hundred years ago, and of no importance for the people of Europe. Even now, the country is not shown on some maps, and most people have still never heard of it or of the Buryats. If the tsarist Russian Empire had developed at the same period and speed as the United States, with construction of good and plentiful communications, development of economy and growth of tourism, no doubt Europe would know Lake Baikal in Buryatia as one of the great beauty-spots of the world, like the Grand Cañon. But this remarkable region and its people are still almost unknown to Europe. Why then should the ancient history of such a small and backward nation as the Buryats have any interest for us?

There are several reasons, ethnological and social. Humanity, in these decades of bitter strife among and within nations, is becoming more and more interested in—humanity. The whirl of battle appears to man more and more like a maelstrom in which he fears he will be sucked down and drowned in a cataclysm of mutual murder. So he more and more earnestly and urgently tries to discover the directions of the various currents. For centuries and millennia man has examined and charted the changes of the seasons, the changes of the heavens, the changes of the earth, the changes of chemicals, the changes of energy from heat to electricity, the changes of plants from tiny diatom to sweet corn, the changes of animals from jelly-cell to man; but man is now realising for the first time that he has never properly examined and charted the changes of mankind as a whole, the changes of society. Without this study he can never understand whither the present struggle within humanity is leading. And to examine and chart the ways in which humanity changes he must study social history: he must see, that is, in what ways humanity has gone through its past changes. This means studying both modern social history and social changes of “pre-historic” periods.

The Buryat-Mongols afford a good example to study. Isolated and remote, they developed slowly, and the Russian conquest in the seventeenth century found them showing many aspects of a social system belonging to an early period of human history. In this respect they, like the Australian aborigines and some of the peoples in Central Africa, well repay close study. It is, for example, impossible to understand the real democracy without studying it in its original simple form of primitive-communism, where all the people procured the food, all the people equally shared the food, all the people owned all the means of procuring food, and all the people and only all the people decided all affairs. Without seeing this original society and its breakdown one cannot comprehend the direction and changes of direction that society has taken since.

The Buryats at the time when the Russian conquerors first found them were in a state of fundamental social change. Their earlier form of life had apparently been the patriarchal gentile society from which both Greece and Rome were just passing at the beginning of their written history, and this was now giving way to a new, slave-feudalist society—a process involving the unification of the Buryats into a nation. Thus written history discovers the Buryats in a state of violent flux, and almost the very first mention of them is that they are split into two warring political camps.

The history of the Buryats after the Russian conquest has also lessons in comparison. It is of value to the British people, for example, to see how the Russian Empire treated the Buryats and compare the parallel treatment of backward nations in the British Empire.

But the history of the Buryats has one special attraction of enormous importance, one great advantage over that of the Australian aborigines and African tribes. Twenty-odd years

ago the Buryats suddenly achieved freedom on the collapse of the Russian Empire, and they have ever since been rapidly developing as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union.

Thus the history of the Buryats runs from near the beginning of society to the latest stage in human development. The Buryats have almost run the "full circle" that is really a spiral staircase: they are approaching once again a communist society wherein all the people will own all the means of getting food, all the people will procure the food, all the people will share the food, and all the people will settle affairs. But it will not be the communism from which they started: they will procure and share far more than the food and simple necessities that the savage requires; their means of production are becoming enormous; it will be a communism on an immeasurably higher plane.

We can watch in these years their sturdy strides up the last steps of the spiral staircase. Already they own in common all means of production; already they procure products in common; already they settle their affairs as a whole people; only one main thing remains to be achieved—a further development of their economy so that "from each shall be taken according to his ability, to each given according to his needs," when wages will cease to have meaning. The Buryats have gone far even in this respect. I have bought a home-grown tomato in Ulan-Udé, the capital of Buryatia; ten years ago tomatoes had never been seen there; nor had apples; large-scale agriculture was said to be economically impossible because of the climate. Socialism means tomatoes and apples in Ulan-Udé; tomatoes and bacon, hospitals and buses, theatres, parks, schools, cinemas; electrically lit streets—even in villages; aeroplanes and soap—equal novelties; contraceptives and babies' crèches; enormous industrial factories; and workers' rest-homes in the mountains: these are what

Socialism has brought to Buryatia. More and more of them will bring communism.

This history is thus split into two halves: up to the Revolution of 1917 (including a look backwards into the primeval progenitors of the Buryats who lived long before history began) and after the Revolution (including a look forward into the perspectives of the future, the vast outlines of which are now becoming visible to the Buryats). These two parts have one thing, and almost one thing alone, in common: struggle against the Buryat people's enemies. But while the struggle of the Buryats against the Russian imperial conquerors and rulers from the seventeenth century onwards was even more hopeless than that of the Abyssinians against Italian Fascism in 1936, their struggle since 1917 has been triumphant and victorious. Why? Because they now have allies—the working-class of Russia and of the innumerable nations that go to make up the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the struggle has been fierce, because the enemy has been fierce in defeat; there have been many casualties, much loss of wealth, serious set-backs in the development of culture and richness of life. Much must be laid at the door of those in whose interests it was to keep the Buryats in their old state of ignorance, poverty and miserable subjection. The merchants, the rich peasants, the money-lenders, the old imperial administrators—both Russian and Buryat—could not give up their ancient privileges over the Buryat masses without a fight. When they were defeated in open battle by a combination of the young Red Army and Buryat guerillas, the fight certainly disappeared from the open, but it went on unrelentingly underground. Many of the Buryats, no longer seeing the battle before their eyes, forgot about it: "out of sight, out of mind": and so the old enemies were able to do vast damage before they were at last, only a few years ago, discovered at their work. By that time they had gone very far.

Drastic measures were necessary; drastic measures were taken; those measures were the political reflection of the harm that had been wrought.

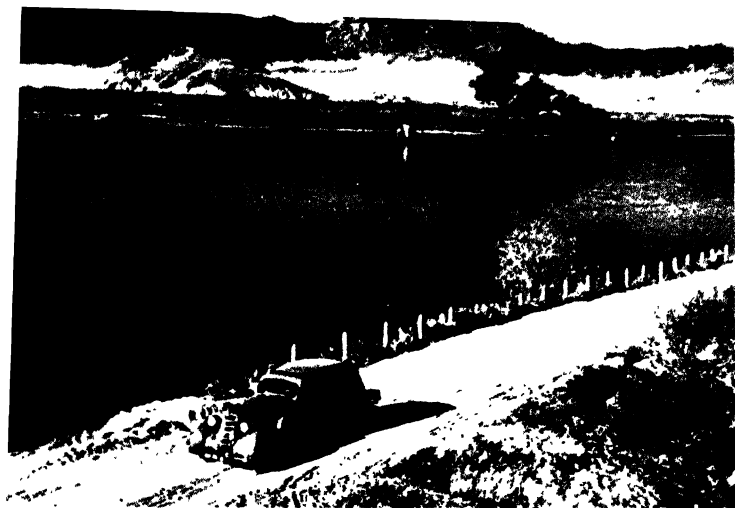
Yet, despite all set-backs, despite all Wills-o'-the-Wisp who tried to lure the Buryats from their path and into the bog, the issue has never been in doubt since the Buryats achieved their freedom in 1920. There has never been any doubt that this little Mongol people would eventually become a united, free, prosperous nation.

The principal sources of information used in compiling this book are: *Studies from the History of the Western Buryat-Mongols* (A. Okladnikov); *The Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic* (M. I. Pomus); *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* (Yule edition); *Unknown Mongolia* (Douglas Carruthers); *Buryat Tales* (collected by various Russian and Mongol students); *Legends of the Barguzin Buryats* (A. I. Vostrikov and N. N. Poppe); *History of the Mongols* (Sir H. H. Howorth); Mongolian folk-lore studies of N. N. Poppe; *Genghis Khan* (Ralph Fox); articles in the *Great Soviet Encyclopædia* and *Encyclopædia Britannica* on the Buryats, Huns, Evenki, etc.; the Findings of the 1931 Expedition of the Academy of Sciences of U.S.S.R. (Baikal and Trans-Baikal Section); *Ancient Society* (L. H. Morgan) and its interpretation *The Origin of the Family* (F. Engels); *Armed Intervention in Russia* (W. P. and Zelda K. Coates); *The Russian Peasantry* (Stepniak); *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (J. V. Stalin) and works on the same subject by V. I. Lenin; the magazines *Narody Dalnego Vostoka* (Irkutsk, 1921) and *Novy Vostok*; the newspapers *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and *Buryat-Mongol Pravda*; observations by the author during a visit to Buryatia in 1934 and conversations with Buryats in Moscow and Leningrad in 1936. Relevant passages in other works, such as those of Rashid-ed-Din and Abulghazi, appear in those noted above.

## BURYATIA AND LAKE BAIKAL

THE IMPRESSION THAT one receives as one reaches Lake Baikal from the west in the early dawn is unforgettable. As the train meets the rushing Angara river and runs up beside it towards the lake, the mountains march in towards one in the half-light, ever more huge, more massive, more crowded; until suddenly the narrow view ahead opens out into an enormous panorama, and the train has turned sharp right to run alongside the lake. In a moment the train halts (unless one is unlucky enough to be on the de-luxe express) at Baikal station, and one can get out to absorb the extraordinary scene. To right and left the lake gradually disappears in the morning mist; but opposite, thirty miles away on the far side, like a tremendous fortress-wall is the great mountain range of Khamar-Daban—its hundreds of peaks, snow-tipped even in summer, now limned with red in the rising sun almost behind them while the lower slopes are still deep purple; and from them across the thirty miles of mirror-like water stretches almost to the traveller's feet a path of gold that grows brighter minute by minute as light floods over the mountains to fill the huge basin. The air is hard and brilliant, the sky deep and lambent. It is a great exaltation to witness this first view of Baikal and then, stooping down on the almost precipitous bank, to wash away sleepless weariness in the ice-cold crystal water of the great lake before continuing the journey.

Buryatia occupies a peculiar geological position. It lies at the point where the Altai mountains, continuing eastward in the Sayan and Tunka ranges, come up against the southwestern tip of the tremendous Yablonoi range. It is as if two giant currents in the earth's crust had met almost head-on,



The picturesque Selenga River near Ulan-Udé



The national economist, Madasov congratulates members of the





Timber Transport on Lake Baikal



and caused a whirlpool of mountains the central cup of which is Baikal. The lake, 400 miles long, surrounded by mountain range behind mountain range, is not only one of the largest in the world: it is nearly three times the deepest. Its greatest depth is 5693 feet or about a mile; the next deepest is Crater Lake in Oregon, U.S.A., 1995 feet deep. On the southern frontier of Buryatia is the great mountain Munko-Sardyk, more than two miles high. Even the mountains which rise sheer out of Baikal itself are often well over a mile high.

One river, the Angara, flows out of Baikal; many flow into it. "Baikal has one daughter and many mothers," say the Buryats. The Angara provides one of the two exits from the basin, but it has dangerous rapids. The other main exit is up the Selenga which flows in from the south, from Mongolia; this river, rather like the Rhine in aspect, provides easy exit. Between the Angara and the Upper Lena on the west, and on the Selenga on the south, are broad, rolling steppes suitable for horse-breeding. In most other parts of the basin the forests are dense.

Geographically almost isolated, Baikal has retained some odd biological phenomena: fishes and certain kinds of plant life found nowhere else in the world, which give scientists much material for study.

This strange sea of Baikal holds in its abyssal depths many secrets that man has not been able to wrest away. Not everywhere round its shores do the mountain sides fall precipitously into the water: in some places the rivers flowing into the lake have formed deltas, large or small, such as those at the mouths of the Selenga, the Barguzin, and the Upper Angara which flows in at the northern tip. Those rivers, like the lake itself, are alive with fish. The wooded valleys around are full of game. As far as defence was here necessary for primitive man, it was easy. And here has lived man, if not ever since he

cultivation of maize and plants. . . . As a mixture of forest and prairie it was an excellent game country. A species of bread-root, the kamash, grew in abundance in the prairies. In the summer there was a profusion of berries. But in these respects it was not superior to other areas. That which signalled the region was the inexhaustible supply of salmon in the Columbia and other rivers of the coast. They crowded these streams in millions and were taken in the season with facility, and in the greatest abundance. . . . Beside these were the shell-fisheries of the coast, which supplied a large amount of food during the winter months. Superadded to these concentrated advantages, the climate was mild and equable throughout the year." Except that the shell-fisheries are lacking, and that the climate, while equable for Central Asia, is nevertheless severe, Baikal would fit this description as easily as the Columbia Valley. Morgan goes on, "It can be shown with a great degree of probability that the Valley of the Columbia was the seed-land of the Ganowánian (American Indian) family, from which issued, in past ages, successive streams of migrating bands, until both divisions of the (American) continent were occupied. And further, that both divisions continued to be replenished with inhabitants from this source down to the epoch of European discovery."

The physical analogy of Baikal with the Columbia Valley is remarkably close. Buryatia is a mixture of forest and prairie—forests around Baikal itself, prairie or steppe gradually approaching on west and south. There is a wealth of game, the numerous rivers and lakes are among the world's richest fisheries. There is even a plenitude of edible roots and berries—a liliaceous plant called "kandyk" found in Buryatia and adjacent regions corresponds to the Columbian "kamash," and its roots are still dug up for food by neighbouring primitive peoples such as the Uriankhai of Tannu-Tuva. Moreover these conditions apply with such force to no area, other than

Buryatia, for thousands of miles around, except Tannu-Tuva to the immediate south-west.

Thus, if Morgan's belief about the Columbia Valley as a "seed-land" of American Indians is correct, it would appear that our question, reduced to its utmost simplicity, should be not "Did the Buryats come from Mongolia?" but "Did the Mongols, Turks and Huns come from Buryatia?" Here, indeed, on the shores of the lake and in the rich, sheltered, woody valleys around, was a country that must have delighted the weary heart of the first Old Stone Age man who, probably driven by oncoming waves of men from the south, crossed the bare, high Mongolian plains and suddenly burst upon this virgin land. Here he could rest and multiply until some of his sons grew greater, threw away their stone weapons and tools and made them metal ones, tamed animals to their will, and sallied forth to pasture on the plains again—this time as their master.

Has this been the story of Baikal? Or has it rather been, as some hold, a story of peoples forming on the Mongolian plains, sweeping east and west to conquer China and Europe, and in the process sending successive eddies of humanity into the backwater round Baikal? It seems likely that both are partly true: that men in repetitive process emerged from Baikal, began their great movements on the plains and swept some of their weaker elements back to the lake region.

## THE ANCIENT BURYATS

### § 1

WHERE DID THEY come from? That is the first question that comes to mind in considering the ancient history of a people. Yet the question has little or no reality for most people. For example, where did the English come from? There is no single, simple answer to the question. Humanity has never been static. There have been times of rapid movement of the populations of whole continents, and there have been long periods of slow and gradual movement; but man has in the main always kept moving in the continual search for security from his eternal dread—starvation. Here and there one may come across communities which with some certainty can be described as original to the land they now occupy: such are the natives of Australia, who for whole epochs were cut off by geography from other peoples—and who, probably in consequence, developed only extremely slowly. But such instances, valuable for the study of man's growth, are rare and special, as are the platypus and other animal curiosities of that same Australia. Most peoples have formed themselves in ways far more complex, far less monotonous, than the Australian natives.

So with the Buryats. The forests and mountain ranges of Buryatia formed no such impassable barrier to the outside world as did the seas surrounding Australia; they only made movement slow and difficult. There is no single, simple way of saying whence or from whom or when the Buryats came to Buryatia. There is no documentary evidence of the coming of any of them to Baikal; but that does not mean they must all be indigenous to Buryatia. From different sets

of circumstantial evidence, various scientists have pinned themselves to one theory or the other: the Buryats are original to Baikal, or on the contrary they were formed from a mixture of human flotsam and jetsam thrown into Buryatia from the great plains to the south and south-east.

What do the Buryats say about their own origin? The Ekhirit-Bulagat (western) Buryats tell the following story:

"Three water-babies—two boys and a little girl—came out of Lake Baikal to play upon the shore. They played until they were tired, and then fell asleep. The two witches Asuikhen and Khusukhen saw the water-babies lying asleep, and tried to capture them. But the children, waking up, cried to the great lake and the mountains, 'Take us, Milky Sea Mother. Take us, Inaccessible Mountain Father.' Thereupon waves rose high on the lake, rushed on to the shore and almost swept the witches into the depths of Baikal. The little girl turned into a seal and disappeared in the lake. One of the boys turned into a black squirrel and hid in the mountains. The other boy was caught by the witch Khusukhen, and was given the name Ekhirit. He was called 'Ekhirit-who-was-found-on-the-steep-bank,' and it was said of him 'His mother was a crevice on Baikal's shore, his father was the speckled burbot fish.'"

A variation of the legend says the three children were all boys: Ekhirit, Bulagat and Khoridai, who founded the Buryat tribes of Ekhirit, Bulagat and Khor. Khoridai, says this story, went on to the island of Olkhon in Baikal, where he saw some swans washing themselves in the lake. Recognising them as really heavenly princesses, he seized one of them for his wife, hiding her winged garments. The two lived together many years and had thirteen children, but always Khoridai refused to tell where her winged garments were. One day, however, saying "Now we have so many children I don't know where to put myself," she persuaded

Khoridai, who brought her swan-clothes. Putting them on, she climbed on to the shelf in the tent and asked "Am I beautiful?" Khoridai replied, "You are an old woman, don't preen yourself." She rose to the smoke-hole in the roof and asked again, "Am I beautiful?" and Khoridai said, "You'll never be beautiful again, you old hag." Then she cried "Farewell, then! I am of heavenly birth, you are mere mortal. One of your sons will be a shaman (witch-doctor) and one of your daughters will be a wizardess. But never give them spleen to eat!" With these words she flew away, and from that day their descendants never eat spleen and never hunt swans.

A similar story is told of Ekhirit. The Buryats say they kill no swans lest their spirits should come and haunt the place and the killer. The witch Asuikhen appears in another legend directly as the Buryats' original ancestress. "She had two sons, Buryadai and Khoridai"; Buryadai finds a wife (swan-princess?) in the woods, and has two sons—the elder Ekhirit and the younger Bulagat; Ekhirit had eight sons and Bulagat six, while Khoridai had eleven; from all these the Buryats are descended.

These are some of the stories told by the Ekhirit-Bulagat tribes of the western Buryats, the stories of the Genesis of their Adams. They are the oldest of their folk-stories, and they make it quite clear that in their belief their Garden of Eden was Baikal.

It may be a lot too much to say "The Bulagats and Ekhirits ought to know their origin if anybody ought." But, nevertheless, what is folk-lore is not the expression in ideas of the real life of man? It is primitive literature, corresponding on a lower scale to modern writing on philosophy, science, romance. And it naturally reflects the real life of the times in the same way, if not as closely, as modern literature reflects modern life. It had to, for there was nothing else

for it to reflect. The mirror is a crude and primitive one, but must not on that account be ignored.

One may argue that the stories are placed around Baikal, perhaps, simply because as tribes came to this region their folk-lore had to adjust itself to meet the new conditions; and, certainly, folk-lore always does more or less adjust itself, though very tardily, to new conditions. But it is difficult to see how the story of Ekhirit and the witches, for example, could have been evolved anywhere except by Baikal: it might have been by the Lake Kossó-Gol a little to the south-west—which would make little difference; otherwise the nearest large lake, the nearest lake likely to make such a deep impression on a people's ideology, is many hundreds of miles away, and even then the details of the story (such as the surrounding mountains) would not fit.

The thirteenth-century Persian historian Rashid-ed-Din, describing "Bargudjin-Tukum" (Buryatia), says it is "near the limit of the most distant inhabitation," suffering great frosts and terrible storms. Here were "multitudes of celebrated shamans," and among its "forest-tribes" are some "now known as Mongols. But their name is not really Mongol"; these are "the Bargut tribe, Khori and Tulas. The Tumet tribe is a branch of these. They are close to one another. . . . In these regions lived many other tribes such as the Oirats, Bulagachins, Keremuchins; and a tribe called the Oin-Uriankha was also near to these regions." The Uriankhai to-day inhabit Tannu-Tuva, west of western Buryatia, and the Oirats are farther west still. From Rashid's description Okladnikov sees Bargudjin-Tukum as mainly western Buryatia, though including the eastern shore of Baikal. Here, says Okladnikov, "in the Western Baikal mountains and valleys, on the edge of the taiga (Siberian jungle), one might expect to find preserved the ancient population, its manners of life and social relations." The western



Buryats, especially the Ekhirits and Bulagats, did in fact preserve most strongly the survivals of old clan-relationships, together with shamanism and various ideological survivals of the most ancient stages of society—even of primitive-communism. "In their society," says Rashid, "no one is obscure and there are no outstanding or glorified men in these tribes."

Marco Polo, the thirteenth-century Venetian traveller, says, "When you leave Karakorum (the great Mongol city on the Orkhon river) . . . you go north for forty days till you reach a country called the Plain of Bargu. The people here are called Mescrypt (or Mekri in one edition); they are a very wild race, and live by their cattle, the most of which are stags, and these stags, I assure you, they use to ride upon. Their customs are like those of the Tartars (*i.e.* Mongols), and they are subject to the Great Khan (Kublai). They have neither corn nor wine. They get birds for food, for the country is full of lakes and pools and marshes, which are much frequented by the birds when they are moulting, and when they have quite cast their feathers and cannot fly, these people catch them (just as Khoridai caught his swan-wife). They also live partly on fish. And when you have travelled forty days over this great plain you come to the ocean, at the places where the mountains are in which the peregrine falcons have their nests. And in those mountains it is so cold that you can find neither man nor woman, nor beast nor bird, except one kind of bird called Barguerlac, on which the falcons feed. . . . And when the Grand Khan wants peregrines from the nest he sends thither to procure them. It is also on islands in that sea that the gerfalcons are bred. . . . The gerfalcons are so abundant there that the Emperor can have as many as he likes to send for."

This passage certainly refers to Baikal. Going by the old Mongol road from Karakorum, the Plain of Bargu would probably be the steppes west of Baikal where the Bulagats

and Ekhirits have their home; failing that, it must be the Vitim Plateau whence the Barguzin river (the largest of that name in Buryatia) flows into Baikal. But his Mescrypt or Mekri apparently are the Merkit, a Mongol people from whom Chingis Khan's father took his bride; the Merkit are believed to have inhabited the forests south-east of Baikal down to the Selenga valley and over the Vitim Plateau, where according to the somewhat hazy Mongol historians themselves the Bargu people also dwelt. Whether Bargu and Merkit were two peoples inhabiting one territory, or whether one was a larger unit embracing the other, is not clear. Some students derive "Bargu" as a Chinese form of "Bulagat" or "Buryat" or both. Rashid says Bargudjin-Tukum is also called Bargu, and mentions the Bargut tribe as inhabiting it. A suffix of "it," "ut," "at" or "t," or with "d" instead of "t," is the Mongol indication of the plural.

What seems fairly certain is that both Bargu and Merkit peoples were a branch or branches of the Mongol people; and that, if the Buryats were originally a separate people from these, they nevertheless absorbed large Bargu or Merkit infiltrations. The Buryats themselves speak of the Bargu as their ancestors, and some of their legends recall one "Bargu-Bator" as their "Adam."

The evidence that some Buryats were indigenous to Baikal is not confined to folk-lore or to thirteenth-century writers. On the territory now occupied by the Buryats have been found ancient graves and earthworks, recent excavations in which show an almost continuous progression (more and more clear and continuous in the later stages) from Old Stone Age man up to the Buryats of the seventeenth century when they were discovered by the Russians. The four final stages are especially interesting.

The first of these four stages is the late Neolithic, and the remains seem to show a gradual division of the people

into two parts: one occupied with hunting and reindeer-herding in the forests, the other with settled fishing, crude agriculture and gathering of wild vegetable foods (leaves, roots and berries) in the river valleys.

In this stage of development, peoples all over the world were organised into gentes or clans, in which descent was in the female line because it was still only certainly traceable through mothers. Even in modern civilised countries paternity is not always as certain as it is supposed to be! In primitive society, if a woman conceived, well, that was what women did—as birds fly and fishes swim; the very idea of paternity had either not yet evolved, or was still only young and unimportant. At the historical stage previous to the matriarchal clan, the family had consisted of not one man married to one woman, but of a group of men all married to a group of women; the men of one group were all brothers (*i.e.* sons of a single group of women), and their joint wives were all sisters (daughters of a single group of women). It was therefore at that time impossible to trace descent except through mothers, and it was in fact traced not through individual mothers but through mother-groups. Out of these groups later rose the clan and the “pairing family,” in which at any one time one woman cohabited with one man; but descent for long remained in the female line, as the pairing family could be broken up at will by either party, and frequently was.

Marriage within the clan was strictly forbidden—indeed, that was the main purpose of the clan: brides and spouses could only be taken from various affiliated clans which acknowledged mutual kinship (as, for example, the Ekhirits and Bulagats, which were originally only clans before they grew so big that they became separate tribes split up into component clans). The means of life—fish-hooks, nets, spears, living-quarters, etc.—were the property not of any

individual but of the whole clan. On death, objects used by the dead person reverted to the clan. If a husband left his wife, he took away with him back to his own clan only those objects he had taken with him on marriage or those he had since made; and he left his children behind with his wife, to whose clan they belonged.

The ideology of this ancient period is represented in a distorted form by the legend of the two witches Asuikhen and Khusukhen, who were probably originally the eponyms or "original ancestors," by female lineage, of two intermarrying clans. Indeed, as we have seen, one legend traces the Buryats' descent directly back to Khusukhen. These folk-stories relate to a very old social phenomenon: that of totemism. The swan, seal and squirrel plainly were once totems, objects venerated by particular clans which derived descent from them. (Possibly "Ekhirit" is derived from "kheré," a squirrel; "Bulagat" similarly may be derived from "bulgan," a sable, or "bulgata," of sable.) It is interesting to note that Lord Baden-Powell, in organising the Boy Scouts into "patrols," each named by a particular animal, was perpetuating both the ancient Red Indian clans and the pagan totem form of primitive religion!

With the gradual improvement of tools and weapons through the use of metal instead of stone, and the consequent increase in available wealth, a revolution occurred in early society. The men, who used the weapons and who herded the animals and therefore tended to possess them, became discontented with the female descent which prevented their children from inheriting their goods and only permitted them to inherit the wife's domestic pots and needles. Moreover the men, possessing the weapons and controlling the herds, were now in a much stronger position than the women. Further, there was no longer, since the establishment of the pairing family, so much doubt as to a child's

paternity, so that lineage in the male line could now be comparatively easily reckoned.

The men therefore imposed their will: descent was changed from the female line to the male. Property at death still remained in the clan; the father's weapons remained in his clan and the household goods in the mother's, but the children now belonged to the father's clan, not the mother's; and the herds went with them. Before, the man left his clan to live with his wife's; now, the wife went to live with her husband's. At almost a stroke, the woman had lost the economic basis for her ancient equality with or even superiority to the man. Asuikhen gives place to Ekhirit, the swan-princess is subjugated by Khoridai.

It is people of this stage of development that are represented by graves and burial-places known to students as "Kurumchin," scattered about the steppes and the partly-forested valleys in Western Baikal. These people possessed iron tools and weapons. They lived in large dug-outs in the hills or on promontories jutting into the rivers, where a few such dwellings were surrounded by crude fortifications of ditch and dyke. Around the settlements were patches of rudely ploughed land. Excavators here have found rough pottery, bones of cattle, horses and wild beasts, especially the roe-deer. These relics connect up, through the Oka and Uda valleys, with similar remains on the Yenisei near where it emerges from Tannu-Tuva, and in the other direction they reach round the southern foot of Baikal to the deltas of the Selenga and Barguzin rivers. They coincide largely with the area occupied by the Buryats at the coming of the Russians in the seventeenth century; and the Buryats, especially those of Barguzin, describe these remains as those of their Bargu ancestors. The earliest are about two thousand and the latest about one thousand years old.

The Buryat folk-lore dating from this stage of society

contains many epic stories of adventure of heroes, who battle against demons called "mangatkhai"; this word was apparently originally derived from a term meaning "great snake," corresponding closely to the Greek "hydra," the many-headed dragon of other European folk-tales, and similar figures in Red Indian stories and tales from many other parts of the world; now, however, "mangatkhai" denoted a being in more or less human form, often with a female counterpart. The mangatkhai has many heads, and his power and evilness are in direct proportion to their number. The hero has to cut off all the heads. Sometimes he is faced by a whole family (or clan?) of mangatkhai, and as he kills each another comes forward with an even greater number of heads. It is probable that in the earlier forms of the stories the mangatkhai was fought not by a hero but by a communal troop; for under early society, where every one did everything in common (including war), where the very idea of the individual had not yet arisen, the notion of the epic hero could not have been formulated. The hero could only arise after outstanding individuals had in real life emerged over the surface of the rest of the clan.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the figure of the mangatkhai, under one name or another, is common to the folk-lore of peoples throughout the world. And as in the Buryat, so also in the folk-lore of lands from Scotland and Ireland to Africa and America, one method of killing him is frequently narrated: his "soul" is hidden in some other object, and the "soul" (or even two "souls") must be killed before the demon can be killed; or else the killing of the "soul" itself kills the demon, be he never so far away. Often the "soul" is inside an egg, the egg inside a duck (for example), the duck inside a big fish, the fish inside a fox on some distant, inaccessible mountain; in trying to evade the hero, any of these—fox, fish, duck or egg—may change itself into any other object, such as a handful of grain; and the hero may also change himself, perhaps into a hen to peck up the grain. Usually the hero chases the demon for having run off with the hero's wife and, perhaps, livestock. These and other common folk-lore features are so widely scattered over the globe, that it seems wildly improbable that they can have come from one original source. The only other explanation is that they reflect the ideology of very primitive society through which all peoples have passed, late or early; among more primitive peoples the more developed forms of folk-lore are not found—naturally, because this folk-lore is the expression of a more developed society.

A burial-place in the Ekhirit-Bulagat territory is similar to those of the "Kurumchins" in some of its contents, but also shows some new features: the body is buried in a log-coffin under a big stone; a horse is sometimes buried with it; lambs' bones are found in the same grave; and the dead man is accompanied by a Mongolian knife and bridle-bit. These are features of the next, final link in the archæological chain of Buryatia. And it is at this point that the legend of Doné-Bayan points the way.

On the left bank of the Alar river lived Doné-Bayan, owner of incalculable wealth. "Doné-Bayan himself did not know how many cattle he had. At his dwelling so much kurunga (fermented milk) was prepared every day that anyone who wanted could drink himself senseless. Seven old men, relations of Doné-Bayan, got into the habit of getting drunk at his expense till they collapsed dead-drunk in his dwelling. Doné-Bayan's indignant wife made up her mind to put a stop to it. She cursed the seven old men as shameless drunkards and used other unspeakable terms, dragged them by the hair out of the dwelling and threw them down, and poured the kurunga away on the ground. The tribal gods could not tolerate such a transgression of the ancient laws, and deprived the people of their abundance of food. From the kurunga that Doné-Bayan's wife had poured away rose the lake of Sagan-Nor in the Alar steppes. The gods further punished Doné-Bayan himself for his greed and love of property. When he gave his daughter away in marriage, he was so mean that he only gave one nanny-goat to feast the clan. His daughter, weeping in shame, drew the churn-staff from the kurunga-pot and began beating the behinds of Doné-Bayan's beasts. The goats turned into wild goats (wherefore all wild goats have white behinds) and the horses and cows turned into deer and elk."



The Buryat-Mongols are among the world's finest horsemen. Here they are at play—a relay race at an annual festival.



A former "Shaman" medicine-man, now a teacher, shows how it was done





The Eskimo hunter returns home

This story illustrates what was happening among the inhabitants of Buryatia of round about the time of the Norman Conquest of Britain. The ancient clan laws of unlimited hospitality, especially towards fellow-clansmen—a survival of the old primitive-communism of still earlier society—were beginning to break down with the rise of rich men, to whose interests such laws were opposed. These rich men probably still possessed their property formally as property of the clan, but in actual fact it was becoming the property of “big families,” social and economic units within the clan and increasingly opposed to the clan as a whole. The “big family” consisted of man and wife, the man’s old father and mother, his brothers and unmarried sisters, and his brothers’ families. All lived within the general clan encampment, but in a group of tents around that of the head of the “big family”—not necessarily the old man, but more often his eldest son. In this person the property of the “big family” was vested. The brothers of the head man, or his sons, sometimes split off to found new “big families”; sometimes the “big family” grew so large that it became a new clan and split off from the old—especially when it had much property and saw no reason why the use of it should be shared by the rest of the clan. The indignation of the less-favoured clansmen at this increasing individualism of the rich is expressed in the anger of the gods (gods specific to the tribe or to the clan itself) at Doné-Bayan’s greed.

And after the graves of the “Kurumchins,” we next find plenty of evidence of the rich Doné-Bayans of Buryatia. The graves of the eleventh century onwards show an increasingly sharp division into two kinds: rich and poor. The rich were buried in log-coffins together with lambs, Chinese bronze mirrors, remains of lacquered saddles, pearls, silver and gold ornaments, pieces of harness with rich bronze ornamentation, stirrups and bridle, a complicated Mongolian

long-bow, arrow-heads with whistle-holes, etc.; silk fabrics, a silver cup on a long stem. These graves were marked by a platform of flat stones arranged in a circle. In the poor graves, on the other hand, were found pieces of crude woollen clothing, boots, small hand-spinning wheels, women's birch-bark boxes, arrow-heads, and grains of millet and buckwheat.

These two kinds of grave show how society in Buryatia was developing as early as the eleventh and even, in some places, the tenth century. The rich man's death, and apparently his life, circled round his horses, his herds, his riches and his drinking-cup. The rank-and-file clansmen, on the other hand, looked after herds, practised home handicrafts, and sowed grain. The herds, especially the droves of horses, were being collected into the hands of a few; and the others were being left to do the donkey-work of looking after the cattle, growing fodder for beasts and food for men hunting and a little fishing.

How had these changes occurred? What was life like during these later stages?

## § 2

OF the different kinds of livestock, reindeer were probably the first to be domesticated even so far south as Buryatia. A section of the Uriankhai, inhabiting the most isolated part of Tannu-Tuva—the Upper Yenisei basin—immediately to the south-west of Buryatia, still live solely by hunting wild fruit and root gathering, and herding of reindeer which they milk, ride, and use for transport in their half-yearly migrations. We have seen that as late as the thirteenth century Marco Polo says the "Mescript" of the Plain of Bargu use "stags" to ride upon. The people of Buryatia, especially western Buryatia or Bargudjin-Tukum, during the first thousand years of our era were probably few in number, living in isolated encampments far from each

other, with perhaps twenty or so dwellings in each encampment—divided up into “big family” groupings. Each encampment consisted of a clan, marriage within which was forbidden; men went out on journeys and brought back wives from other clans. Although descent was now and had long been in the male line, women were still highly honoured. In communal hunts called “Zegeté-Aba” (literally “wolverine-beat”) in winter-time, women shared equally with men in both the hunting and the sharing of the spoils. In emergencies or on special occasions, such as an official delegation to another clan or tribe, a woman was as likely to be chosen to lead or represent the people as a man; in the earlier stages she even sometimes occupied a leading position in military campaigns. Girl-children, however, were less welcomed than boys, because on marriage they represented a loss of property to their clan. Their religion was earlier still a sheer nature-worship of the spirits of earth, sky, water, storm, trees, mountains, and the household, together with the clan’s Adam (such as Bulagat) or, before the change of descent, its Eve (such as Asuikhen); later it became concentrated in the hands of the elected civil leaders both of tribe and of its component clans. These leaders, called shamans (corresponding closely to the “sakhems” of the American Iroquois Red Indians—and echoed in the Boy Scouts’ “troop leaders” and “patrol-leaders”), were probably elected for life, but could be deposed for bad behaviour. Men or women could be shamans.

Their dwellings, at first dug-outs, later probably came to consist of strips of birch-bark, sewn together and laid over poles, such as the reindeer-Uriankhai still use. With the later development of herding, the birch-bark was replaced by skins or even felt. In moving camp from winter quarters (where clans would meet for barter of different kinds of produce, exchange of brides, elections or depositions of

shamans, and discussion of tribal policy), only the birch-bark or other covering would be rolled up and taken away; the poles would be left standing, for a separate set was kept at the summer quarters in the higher pasture-lands to which the clans would go by forest-paths narrow, ill-marked, but well remembered by centuries of tradition.

The various tribes of Buryatia at this time probably spoke many different languages, each tribe having its own. The more primitive a community is, the more numerous and diverse its languages generally seem to be; as for example Papua, where are hundreds of languages all quite distinct from each other and showing nothing in common with any other languages in the world. (Conversely, in the most highly developed and organised countries differences even of dialect—such as Yorkshire or Devonshire—are disappearing, and most minority languages such as Cornish are already dead; while the Esperanto movement gathers force.) The tribes which developed the domestication of animals and herds adopted Mongol culture and tended to adopt Mongol language; the tribes living in the depths of the forest remained primitive, and their languages—in so far as the people were not absorbed into the developing herders—concentrated round Turkish dialects.

The herders became far less dependent on fish, and fishing in fact ceased to play an important part in their lives. The foremost of these people using animals turned from the reindeer to the ox and cow, which gave a greater yield of food (and were still used for transport), but these animals needed fodder in winter-time, so that some of these people began to improve their ancient, crude agricultural methods. As we have seen, they cultivated millet and buckwheat besides still ranging the forests for edible plants. But now a "division of labour" began to appear and accelerated with the domestication of other animals, especially the horse. The

tribes began to specialise according to the relative height of their development. The lowest, least developed, continued simply to fish, hunt and gather wild plants; the next higher herded reindeer; and at the top were herders of sheep, goats and horses—who, however, still practised a certain amount of agriculture. The first, lowest people remained in the depths of the forest; the last, highest, concentrated in those border-regions of Buryatia where the forest gave place to steppe: in the west (the Ekhirit-Bulagat area, and on the tributaries of the Angara), in the south (around the Selenga valley), and in the extreme east (on the Onon).

While the herders on the west met only more primitive peoples than themselves, and soon came up against a barrage of impenetrable forest again, those on the east and especially the south found in front of them—at their doors—a vast expanse of pasture-land. Probably herding began at a very early date in both west and south, but on the south the herding tribes tended to expand into the Mongolian steppes and pass out at eastern and western ends into China and Europe, pushed forward by others following in their footsteps. In this way several successive waves of men may have come from the Baikal area. (It is not, however, at all likely that all the nations of Asia had their origin at Baikal; for other areas are equally likely to have been “seed-lands,” to use Morgan’s phrase, of human races; for example, the upper Yangtse-Kiang, the Oxus and Jaxartes.)

The division of labour between the tribes meant the growth of trade. Even the horse-herders of the steppe themselves needed the furs of the forest-hunters. But much more than that: from the south there came traders from the distant centres of the civilised world, from Bokhara and Peking. They wanted only one thing, but that they wanted very eagerly: furs, especially sable—“soft gold”—which could be got only from Buryatia and the mountains to

the west of it. They brought with them silks, Chinese bronze mirrors and other articles. They could not easily get in touch themselves with the isolated, remote hunting tribes. But it was easy to get in contact with the well-developed and already more numerous horse-herders of the steppes; and the horse-herders could quite easily find the forest-hunters, with whom they were already trading. So the desire of the horse-herders for the products of the hunters was swelled by their desire for the products of civilisation. Nor were the hunters loth to meet them; they could not themselves use all the furs that they could catch; the herders could give them certain objects (including livestock) of their own production, and could even pass on a small proportion of the products of civilised southern commerce.

Rough units of value were established. Twenty sables were worth nine "palms" (big knives on long handles), one sable was worth a Chinese silver drinking-cup. The sable became the currency, with head of livestock as a secondary unit. Rough trade-routes led through the forest not only between forest-hunting tribes, but between these and winter-encampments of the herders. And in the winter this trade took place.

Meanwhile, the change-over to horse-breeding had brought in its train the beginnings of a fundamental change in social relations among the peoples living on the steppes; and the growth in trade accelerated this change. "What we want," said some of the horse-owners to each other, "is someone to do our agriculture for us, so that we can devote ourselves to our noble horses." And the reply was easy: "If we can have a Zegeté-Aba for hunting, we can have a Zegeté for war. Moreover, with our horses we can mop up these other people." And so they did. The Zegeté-Aba became less a wolverine-beat than a man-beat. They rounded up primitive

tribes and brought them to live near the horsemen's own establishments. As the price of military defeat, these people had to help with agriculture, pay regular fixed tribute of furs, and perform other services as well. It mattered not that some of these forest-hunters belonged to the same tribes as some of the horse-herders: economic development was irresistibly beginning to break down the old clan-relations of brotherhood and mutual help. Indeed, one of the new duties of the subject peoples, or "kishtyms" as they came to be called, was to do the dirty work in the Zegeté-Aba; where it was a hunting or a military expedition, they came to be a sort of infantry; and when the spoils were shared out, they got little or nothing: the lion's share went to the horsemen, who alone had a voice in deciding matters. The biggest share of all went to the horsemen's leader, who was probably a shaman specially designated by the name of "noyon," to distinguish him from civil shamans. "Noyon" seems to be an adaptation of a Mongol title.

The noyon was the expression of the newly-forming arrangement of society; becoming more wealthy, he became in consequence more powerful. From the whole Zegeté-Aba he gradually filched for himself the control of the kishtyms. Like the civil shamans, his office became hereditary—first within the clan (so that the noyon of a tribe could be chosen from only one of the component clans), then within the "big family" (so that the noyon of a clan, including the aristocratic clan from which came the noyon of the whole tribe, could be chosen only from one family); this was *en route* to the final stage in which the head of the family, including the leading family of the leading clan, passed on his position from father to eldest son.

Already, livestock was no longer held in common by the whole clan. The noyon, becoming rich in herds, more and more thwarted the old clan customs. He was the Doné-



Bayan of the legend. The next thing that Doné-Bayan would claim would be the parcelling off of particular pasture-lands for his benefit, as necessitated by the size of his herds. Property in land, or, to put it the other way about, "enclosure" or robbery from the people of common land, was about to descend upon Buryatia.

Meanwhile, the ordinary people were already getting restive at the way things were going for them. The herds, which the noyons for a while continued ostentatiously to call "the clan's herds," were certainly growing bigger: but apart from the noyons the ordinary clansmen saw themselves little or no better off. The noyons, like many another ruler, saw a way of quietening the rank-and-file clansmen by means of war. Raids on other primitive tribes would keep the clansmen satisfied and would yield fur-tribute and other loot. They had already "kishtym" vassal-tribes; the custom of making slaves of prisoners, which had already existed on a small scale for a long time past, now rapidly developed (for with the development of stock-breeding a slave could produce much more than it cost to keep him). As usual, the noyon took the greatest share of this human booty, but other families also did quite well. Noyon and shaman (now often one and the same person) had slaves as their individual property; otherwise the slaves were mostly owned by families. When a shaman died, his slaves were killed.

Meanwhile, in the thirteenth century, Chingis Khan, born just south of Buryatia on the river Onon, had suddenly transformed the face not only of Mongolia but of the world of Asia and Europe.

The same process as has been described above had been gone through by the tribes of Mongolia, but about four hundred years earlier than the people of Buryatia. At the time of Chingis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan, the Venetian Marco Polo, as we have seen, wrote of Buryatia as still

inhabited by "a very wild race" whose livestock even as late as that consisted mostly of "stags" or reindeer, on which they rode. But the Mongol horse-herders of Chingis Khan's time had already developed so far that the clan system of society was on its last legs; and it only needed the powerful push that Chingis gave it to totter completely from its perch and give way to a feudal system, by means of which he welded them into a nation and an irresistible military weapon. Before Chingis there was no Mongol nation: the nearest approach was the confederacy of tribes occasionally formed for specific offensive or defensive campaigns and afterwards generally dissolved. Rights of property had become so well developed that the communal traditions of clan society were an absurd and patent anachronism; clansmen were practically serfs, and slavery (even of clansmen) was widespread; thus the old code of morals had disappeared, without being replaced by the code appropriate to the new property relations. Society was in full decay, the Mongol tribes—both chiefs and tribesmen—were full of discontent and disquiet. It was Chingis who, after suffering many years of severe buffeting by the cross-currents of this disquiet and decay, and having become experienced and steeled in the process, led the first Mongol Revolution, united the tribes into one people, gave them the new code—his famous "yasak"—and set about consolidating the position of the new Mongol state. It was in the process of defending this new Mongolia that (according to Fox) he made the stupendous military campaigns which in a few years produced the largest empire the world has ever seen, extending from Peking to the Danube; rather than with any set intention of world conquest. The clans remained, but no longer as the ruling system.

This stage of complete breakdown of clan society and replacement by feudalism from within was never quite reached by the free peoples of Buryatia: they were on the

point of it in the seventeenth century, when the Russians appeared from Siberia and put an end to all independent development. Feudalism was certainly introduced, but from without, by the Russians.

Why was it that Buryatia was four hundred years behind Mongolia in historical development—and remained far behind even after Chingis Khan? Mongolia was the very nearest country to Buryatia: here, at Karakorum on the Orkhon river, was one of the great cities of the world of that time, to which ambassadors came from all Europe and Asia. The Mongol armies coursed east and west for thousands of miles, yet scarcely troubled little unknown Buryatia to the immediate north.

In reality there is nothing very peculiar about it. Even up to this twentieth century the Balkans, and especially the more isolated, mountainous parts of it like Albania, have been centuries behind the western European countries in historical development. In Wales in Chingis' time monogamy had not yet replaced the loose "pairing family"; and the flourishing Scottish clans were only destroyed in the eighteenth century by the English in order to safeguard their dominion of the Highlands. Buryatia was isolated, a wild land mostly covered by the Siberian "taiga"—a dense, boggy, impenetrable forest. The tribes of Mongolia, on the other hand, were free to develop their horse-herding, their sheep and cattle and goat herds, to the fullest extent, so that the idea of property developed much more quickly; they were also in closer contact with both the trade and the feudal society of the civilised centres to the south-east and south-west, so that the rising aristocracy of the steppes received a double stimulus to achieve similar wealth and glory themselves. The people of Buryatia, on the other hand, were only in contact with China and Bokhara at second-hand—through the peoples of Mongolia; their upper social layers

would receive such stimuli only when feudalism had been developed in Mongolia; and, after Chingis, they did in fact gradually begin to try to emulate the authority, titles and wealth of the feudal khans of Mongolia. But even so, before they could do it the wealth of Buryatia had to be developed: the herds had to become vastly enlarged; and in the conditions of Buryatia this was a longer, more difficult job than on the vast steppes of Mongolia.

More than that: the people of Buryatia had also to become a nation. In the time of Chingis and for long afterwards there was still no nation around Baikal. There were simply different tribes, composed of clans, each having its apportioned, recognised territory separated from other territories by defensive belts of forest which were acknowledged as "no man's land." The tribes whose territory lay on the division between forest and steppe (doubtless at first regarded as unfortunates by the happier peoples inhabiting the better watered regions) were first to begin herding, so that their society developed and their numbers and power grew more rapidly. They conquered other tribes, and doubtless other tribes were occasionally incorporated into their ranks, until they eventually gained the complete ascendancy. At the same time, as the barriers between tribes were thus broken down, the multitudinous languages of the various tribes had perforce to come together. Under the strong influence of Mongolian culture from the south, the resultant common language as it grew became more and more like Mongol; especially when, after the short-lived Mongol Empire broke up, feudalism in Mongolia became so harsh for the ordinary poor Mongol serfs that they took to flight and came as masses of refugees to join the rising people around Baikal, in whose forests their khans would find them only with the greatest difficulty. It was at this period, when the peoples of Buryatia were beginning to

come together to form one people with one common language; when tribe was beginning to mix with tribe and clan with clan; when tribal massifs were forming confederacies on the pattern of the Iroquois Confederacy described by Morgan; when property in livestock was ceasing to belong to the clan and coming to belong to the families that comprised the clan; when wealthier families—jealous of their property—were splitting off and forming their own little clans; when these strong and strengthening horse-herders were reaching out to other more primitive tribes to trade, to exact tribute and to take slaves—it was then that this new, complex, dominant people began to be known as Buryats—perhaps a derivation of “Buri,” meaning “stallion.”

The stories told round the camp-fire changed at this period. One of them told by the Buryats was called “Ninety-years old Irencsei and his old woman, Untan Durai.”

“In olden times lived the old man Irencsei with his old woman Untan Durai. They had no children, which gave them much sorrow.

“One day the old man rode off to check over his herds and saw that a foal had gone. He decided he had been tricked by the yellow mangatkhai Danil or his son. Irencsei rode away on a red ox to seek his foal. He found it in a distant icy country among a herd of crippled horses. Irencsei cured the horses and sent them off to his home, and himself went on to find the mangatkhai, whom he defeated. Arriving home, he found his wife had given birth to a son and daughter. At a great feast the children were named Khankhan Sokto and Agu Nogon.

“One day Irencsei at his wife's request went out hunting. In his absence Untan Durai became the mistress of the defeated mangatkhai. Irencsei's horse warned him of this, but he did not believe it.

“Arriving home, Irencsei drank some wine which his wife

gave him, and became drunk. The wife called the mangatkhai. The drunken Irensei fought his enemy, but his wife scattered red millet under his feet so that he fell. The mangatkhai and his lover killed the old man, but his horse saved the children and carried them away, feeding them for three years as they wandered.

"Khankhan Sokto one day came to a great palace, where lived the yellow eight-headed mangatkhai Zudak. Zudak beat him and shut him in a barn. Shortly afterwards the Master of the Forests arrived as a guest, and took little Khankhan Sokto away with him; then he went after Khankhan Sokto's sister and captured her as well.

"When he had grown up, Khankhan Sokto prayed to the god Khukhudei Mergen to ask for a great horse. Khukhudei Mergen sent him from heaven the horse Khuilun Khukhu. Khankhan Sokto rode to the mangatkhai Zutan and took ferocious revenge. Then he killed the mangatkhai Danil together with his own mother, Danil's mistress. Finding his father's riding-ox, Khankhan Sokto set out to find his father's remains, and for this purpose turned himself into a fish. In the sea he met another fish like himself, from whom he secured a promise of help. A cask was thrown up by the waves, and in it he found Irensei's corpse.

"Khankhan Sokto bore the body home and set out to find the Water of Life, which when he found it he poured over his father, adding aspen leaves. His father came to life, and Irensei's horse reproached him for his lack of caution. Together they rode to the Master of the Forests. While Khankhan Sokto slept, the thirty-headed mangatkhai began to dig a tunnel from out of his palace. Wakened by his sister, Khankhan Sokto fell upon the mangatkhai and killed him."

Thus while the Buryat still occasionally rides the ox, the horse has become his most valuable and reliable companion, friend and helper. On the other hand the mangatkhai has

become a horse-thief and wife-stealer, an owner of herds who captures children to make them slaves and who lives in a great palace. The snake-demon is, in fact, a particularly wealthy and unscrupulous noyon. To emphasise his power and evil the bard gives him more and more heads, as many as "a thousand and eight"; until in later stories he suddenly ceases to be a mangatkhai at all and is accorded the Mongol feudal title of "Khan"—an overlord more terrible than any thousand-headed demon.

The change-over in social form from clan society towards feudalism naturally met with resistance from the clansmen right from the beginning. A contradiction within the newly evolving society became apparent. The social change, the growth of feudal institutions and the establishment of the nation, required the subjugation of both vassal tribes and of the Buryat rank-and-file clansmen to the wealthier Buryat noyon families; but this very process raised against the noyons a formidable force of these subjugated peoples. Kishtym, slaves, and rank-and-file Buryats—their tribal, clan and language differences broken or breaking down—tended to get together against the noyon. True, the noyon adopted the up-to-date principle of "divide and rule," setting Buryat against kishtym and slave and against other Buryats; but the tendency could only be diverted, never abolished. The diversion was frequently by way of war: not only against primitive tribes, but also against other sections of the Buryats, for now was the time when the noyons were struggling among themselves for the headship of the newly forming nation; the biggest and most powerful were fighting to become monarch, the rest were fighting for the lesser positions in feudal hierarchy. Already many noyons now used the Mongol feudal title of "taisha." At times this internal fight between the taishas, and the fight of the common people against the taishas, became so intense that the primitive vassal tribes

seized their chance, refused to pay tribute and asserted their independence, or even themselves raided the Buryats and carried off human and other loot. This was the condition of ferment in which Buryatia was found on the coming of the Russians in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The foregoing sketch of the development of the Buryats from the Stone Age inhabitants of Baikal and through the "Kurumchin" stage up to the edge of feudalism is based on the evidence of folk-lore, archæology, the writings of early travellers such as Marco Polo, and comparative ethnology, all as far as possible combined. But in fact research up to the present has been so far insufficient, and much work has to be done before it can be said with certainty that the picture given above is essentially the correct one. All that can be claimed is that on the evidence now available it appears the most probable.

One odd fact has been adduced to disprove this picture: in the graves of the Kurumchins have been found hand-spinning-wheels made of boghead bearing inscriptions in the "Runic" alphabet found on Turkic monuments on the Orkhon and Yenisei rivers, and dating about the eighth century; whereas, it is pointed out, the Buryats at the time of the Russian conquest had no means of writing. Some students have therefore considered that the Buryats or their ancestors must for some reason have "forgotten" the art of writing. But it seems unlikely either that any people should forget how to write once they had learnt, or that so primitive a people as the Kurumchins should ever have learnt it. They had practically no need of it: the contact between the small, isolated groups of humanity around Baikal at that time was minute. Messages that had to be sent between them almost certainly took the stereotyped primitive form of a symbol, such as an arrow indicating a declaration of war or some other object indicating an invitation to a



discussion. No records of ownership of property were required, for all property belonged equally to every one. There was no necessity to write history, for there practically was no history. Epic poems and folk stories were passed on by word of mouth. Though writing was introduced to the Kurumchins on the spinning-wheels, it can hardly have been their own writing.

Much more probably it was that of the Turkish people whose history the monuments of the Orkhon tell. These Turks, like the Mongols after them, were in contact with fur-seeking merchants from the south, and like the Mongols must have obtained their furs from the tribes of Baikal. Engaged in considerable trade, they had need of writing. It may be that these inscribed spinning-wheels were in the nature of a charm or amulet, worked by Turks in exchange for furs. The mystery does remain unexplained pending further research; but it does not appear likely that the inhabitants of the Baikal forests should have been the subjects of so extraordinary a phenomenon as to learn how to write and then forget it again.

To sum up, in the words of Professor Okladnikov: "We can only point to the likeliest proposition of the originality of the main components of the future Buryat nation in Western Baikal (understood, like the Bargudjin-Tukum of Chingis Khan's epoch, in the broad sense to include both Western Angara and in the east, the area round the mouth of the Selenga).

"In the process of change in economic forms of life, which caused a social development more rapid than among the taiga dwellers, the root inhabitants of the steppes and forest-steppe regions of Western Baikal, in constant cultural contact with the steppe-tribes of Central Asia and absorbing some elements of their culture, certainly underwent considerable mutations. And at the moment of the establishment of

Chingis' empire they already stood comparatively very high, although from the viewpoint of the Khalkha Mongols (those of Mongolia proper) they were only rude forest people, savages, 'barguts.'

"The settled agriculturists-herdsmen of the 'Kurumchin type' on the one hand, and on the other some of the taiga hunters, trappers and herdsmen, were already in strong mutual contact, and together underwent the heightened process of change in life, economy and social structure, according to the general picture given us by archæological remains.

"These were very heterogeneous ethnical groups which had gone over to herding as the main occupation, and which were on the way to establishing, through a common form of life, a number of linguistic tribal groups under the general powerful influence of Mongol language and culture. Towards the seventeenth century the running together of tribal languages—the four dialects of Buryat—had in the main been completed; and the ethnogonic process reached its consummation in the shape of the main tribal groups of the Buryat population—for the community of economic and social conditions within the future Buryat nationality, necessary for this course, had long been reached."

## THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST

### § 1

THE RUSSIAN COSSACKS, in their slow progress eastwards across Siberia, had had an easy time of it. Their movement, indeed, can scarcely be dignified by the name of "conquest" at all: it was rather a matter of infiltration, without any kind of military plan, further and further eastwards in search of the "soft gold," the furs that were as precious to the treasury of the tsar of Moscow as to the merchants of Peking and Bokhara. Although there was no set campaign, no plan of expansion, the Cossacks had met little serious opposition: for the primitive tribes of Siberia, though they were united by the remarkable spirit of solidarity and brotherhood between fellow-tribesmen which is common to clan-society, had no armaments to compare with the Russians' fire-arms and superior military organisation. One by one they acknowledged Russian suzerainty, their headmen accepted "the tsar's grace," they made oaths of allegiance and paid regular tribute of furs, and a new Russian fortress was established—later to become another of the great cities of Siberia. All was going easily when such fortresses were established in 1604 at Tomsk and in 1618 and 1619 at Kuznetsk in the Altai Mountains and Yeniseisk on the Yenisei. The Cossacks prepared to move on eastwards.

The more they now heard about the lands to the east, the more their mouths watered. They heard stories of great wealth of fables and of livestock and of multitudinous humanity—a source of supply for the slave-market. There were even tales of gold and silver mines. But with these stories they also heard others of a strange sort. They heard

of a great white city, built of stone, where bells rang merrily; it stood with other cities beside a great river on which big ships sailed.

Small expeditions went out eastwards to find out more about this marvellous land ahead. They came back with long faces. There certainly did seem to be big rivers ahead, plenty of furs and livestock, possibly gold and silver. But the multitudinous peoples, alas, were not like the tribes of Western Siberia; in fact, they were a warlike, aggressive people, apparently bent on the same mission as the Russians themselves—loot. These peoples were the Kirghiz and the "Brats." So great and well-armed were they, that they were planning to descend upon Tomsk and annihilate the whole Russian community there. And it was a question whether or not they could do it!

A Cossack expedition sent out to bring one small tribe to allegiance and exact tribute came back to report that they secured the allegiance, but as for tribute the tribesmen told them: "We did not expect the arrival of His Majesty's men, and before you came the Brats took all tribute from us." This tribe inhabited the eastern border of the present Minusinsk region in the watersheds of the Kizir, Kazyr, Amyl, Kan, Biryusa and Oda rivers—quite a long way to the west of the westernmost area where the Buryats themselves actually dwelt at that time.

Near the modern town of Krasnoyarsk the Cossacks had a similar experience: the "Brats" were already exacting tribute from the Arin tribe. In 1608 the Cossacks of Ketsky Fort, faced with alternative routes of expansion up the Tungus and Angara or up the Yenisei to the Arin territory, chose the latter for fear of the Evenki forest-tribes on the Angara, who were putting up determined opposition to them. The Arins, on the other hand, were very friendly with the

Ostyaks, who already acknowledged the tsar's suzerainty. And the Ostyaks agreed to lead the Cossacks to the Arins. On the way, they met with a local chieftain who agreed to go on their behalf to the Evenki and persuade them to abandon resistance. The Evenki, however, battered him about and sent him back with his tail between his legs; meanwhile the Arins, whom another mission had visited, gave a little tribute and said "More than this is impossible. The Brats have been warring against us and have taken all the furs we had saved up."

The Cossacks began to feel baffled. Up the Yenisei from the mouth of the Tungus, and east of the Minusinsk region, the Buryats were more or less regularly gathering tribute. The Cossacks of Tomsk, quite unaccustomed to meeting such peoples in Siberia, nervously wrote to Moscow in 1617 that their town was "surrounded" by Kirghiz and Buryats, who would suddenly descend on their fields even right up to the walls of Tomsk itself, attacking the Russian colonisers; and without reinforcements the garrison could not hold the fort. In 1621 and 1622 Tomsk received from the steppes threatening news that one Kharakhul with Kirghiz, Buryats and others was preparing to attack Tomsk, while in 1623 came word that an army of three thousand Buryats, apart from the vassals (kishtyms) with them—an incredibly huge army for that time—had assembled for a grand campaign.

The Russians did what they could: mistrusting quite rightly their native informants, they sent out an expedition from Yeniseisk to visit the Buryat land itself and obtain exact information. They were to report on the Buryats' economy, armed strength and forts, whether there were many Buryats on the Kan river, whither and whence they were going, etc.

It is not known what report was brought back by this

expedition. But—although Buryat raids on the Arins and neighbouring tribes continued even after the building of Krasnoyarsk Fort in 1628—from 1623 onwards there was a sudden complete cessation of the stories of the Buryats threatening war along the Yenisei. The reason we shall see later. Meanwhile, as the fortress at Yeniseisk was built and the colonisers felt their position consolidated, the boot shifted to the other foot: the Cossacks turned to thoughts of bringing the Buryats to homage. They became less interested in the strength of the Buryats' armed forces than in their economy and the wealth of their country—which now seemed so rich as completely to overshadow the Cossack's robbery from the petty Arins, Ostyaks and other small peoples. They collected all the information that they could from the natives of regions near the Buryats, and the prospect looked inviting. A letter from Yeniseisk to the tsar said: "To Your Majesty's honour and mighty arm the country is widening—there are near by Yeniseisk Fort lands many and great, of Brat and Mongol and other various tongues."

For some years the Cossacks tried to get to the Buryats; but it was an exceedingly difficult task because of the belt of pathless, impenetrable forest in the way. The Angara river cut through the forest, but it had dangerous rapids where it ran swiftly between sheer, high cliff-walls; and in the forest lay in wait for the Russians the Evenki, desperate in defence of their freedom. "In this service, Your Majesty, the Tunguses (Evenki) and others have killed many of us," read the tsar. (Indeed, the Evenki's resistance at one time was so successful that other tribes, even the humble Ostyaks, were encouraged almost to the point of rebellion against the Russians.) Only after two forts had been built on the Angara—the Bratsk Fort above the river Ilim and a further fort at Rybnoi Lovlye—and after several groups of the Buryats'

kishtym vassals had been brought to allegiance to the tsar, did the Cossacks in 1629 at last meet the Buryats themselves face to face.

This first meeting was remarkable. The expedition comprised only thirty Cossacks under one Beketov; after a journey of extreme difficulty and danger, travelling as light as possible, it reached the mouth of the Oka, where Beketov apparently had no difficulty in obtaining rich tribute from local Buryat "princelets" (to translate the Russian word used in the archives): not content, it went on up the Angara to visit Buryat settlements on the Unga and Osa, quite near Baikal, getting more tribute from these "princelets" or taishas. After an equally difficult return journey, Beketov landed back in Yeniseisk after a year's absence with such rich booty that his expedition was still being mentioned in despatches to Moscow four years later. And his return was the signal for joyful celebrations not only on account of the richness of the tribute, but above all because—tribute and allegiance to the tsar had been given voluntarily, by the powerful Buryat taishas Bayarakan, Kodogon, Kulzuz, Saadai and others; they had sent especial presents to the voyevoda (governor) of Yeniseisk. These were the terrible "Brats" who, only a year or two before, had been considered dangerous rivals of the Russians!

Although—the point having been gained—the Russian archives do not trouble about the reason for the taishas' eagerness for Russian domination, the matter was nevertheless surprising. The Buryats must have known that Beketov was coming long before he arrived: it would have been easy for them to have annihilated the whole expedition without trace—later Buryat actions showed this, if not the damage done to Beketov's men by the warlike Evenki in the depths of the forests. But instead, they sat and waited for the Russians, and on Beketov's arrival loaded him with presents and

hastened to pay allegiance to his master the tsar. The only difficulties mentioned by Beketov when reporting his experiences later were the Evenki tribes and the Angara rapids.

No further clue comes from Yeniseisk. But from Krasnoyarsk that same year, 1629, came other remarkable news. An expedition from this fort likewise set out to bring Buryats to tribute, and on the Kan river called for guides from the local natives. These latter, however, replied bluntly, "We dare not give you guides to the Brats' country, because they are such people as would kill you, and it would go hard for us. The Cossacks would say we had killed you. But we do not want to commit treason to the tsar, and we do not want to lose either your Cossacks or our own men." Two of their princelets added some interesting remarks: "The Brat people are not to be conquered in this way, they will not become subjects of the tsar or pay tribute. In the Brat country at present there is neither great nor small. We have killed a great prince of theirs. They have been at war among themselves for the last three years. We have prepared to attack them ourselves." One of the princelets added that he would give guides, but only for a military expedition, to attack the Buryats in force.

Thus one expedition on the Angara finds the aristocratic Buryat taishas glad to make compact with the Cossacks; while another simultaneous expedition on the Kan is warned that the Buryat people would kill them. Civil war among the Buryats has been raging for three years, and there is "neither great nor small among them." They have been so weakened by internal strife that their own kishtyms, their subject tribes, have been emboldened to kill an important Buryat taisha. This last act of the kishtyms must surely have been undertaken either without serious resistance from the Buryat people, or else actually in connivance



with some section of the Buryats ranged against the same taisha.

Buryat rank-and-file, kishtyms and slaves had united to some extent against the new rich men who were taking away the last remnants of that security and mutual strength which they enjoyed under clan-society. No doubt it was not so simple as that in practice. Some were fighting probably under the leadership of one taisha or group of taishas, representing themselves as upholders of the old democracy, against another taisha or group of taishas more successful in herding, trading and conquering and so envied by less fortunate aristocrats. Doubtless the followers of this second leadership would see in it their way out of the poverty in which they were living, and into a state of splendour in which they would all live happily ever after. That none of the taishas saw things in just that way would never be allowed to strike the simple mind of the ordinary poor tribesman, still full of the clan traditions by which the taisha was just a sort of elder brother.

Apparently Mongols were also involved in the fighting—probably on the side of those taishas with whom they had well-developed trade relations.

East of the Kan, then, the Buryat country seems at that time to have been held by what might be called the “democrats,” the liberty-loving poorer Buryats who would have no truck with the foreign invaders. Up the Angara, on the other hand, the taishas were still in full control, but doubtless alarmed at events in other parts of the country. And the Angara taishas were therefore glad to have the powerful feudal support of Cossack fire-arms in case their authority should be challenged by the poorer people, whether their own or those of neighbouring taishas.

The Cossacks, on their side, were instructed to try to bring the Buryat princelets to tribute, but by persuasion.

and flattery and not by force. They were especially ordered to find out how wealthy were the Buryats in furs and other goods, and whether they were accustomed to trade. This suited the taishas' book perfectly. They had a rich source of fur tribute themselves from their kishtyms and from their own Buryats. The trade routes to the south and to the Mongol merchants were cut off by the civil war. There was getting to be a glut of sables in the taishas' store. And indeed even the expedition before Beketov's had been told by Evenki that "the Brats are waiting to trade with you." The Buryat taishas were indeed waiting to trade with the Russians, were eager to obtain the Russians' armed support of their authority, and were therefore ready to pay homage and tribute to the tsar: it was cheap at the price. But the rank-and-file Buryats had no stores of sables to sell, had no authority or privileges to protect, and saw in foreign subjugation only the doubling of their present burdens: they would have to give tribute to satisfy both their own taishas and the Russian overlords. Thus the coming of the Russians rendered the division among the Buryats more acute, while it also in time crushed out the expression of that division—the war between taisha and tribesman.

At this precise point, when the taishas of the Angara valley were eager for friendly relations with the Russians, and when here at least the Buryat tribesmen had not thoroughly wakened up to the realisation of what those relations would mean for them—it was at this point that the Russians themselves in a single stroke destroyed the progress that they had so easily and quickly made, and raised against themselves a bitter resistance which was to take years of hard fighting to break down.

Surprisingly enough, an Englishman may be said to be partly at the bottom of the trouble that now began to envelop the Russians in their Buryat adventures. An English traveller

named Logan said that in this region were "stones" which appeared to be silver and gold. The Cossacks sent out expeditions to find these ores, and received remarkable stories about two princes who owned a whole mountain of solid silver.

Moscow, generally very miserly with regard to the Siberian colonisers, was galvanised into action. Khripunov, the governor of Yeniseisk, was ordered to take one hundred and fifty soldiers—far more than had ever been seen at Yeniseisk—with the enormous sum of sixty roubles, stores of bread and plenty of trade-goods to buy up these unwitting millionaire princes.

The one hundred and fifty soldiers were gathered from all over Siberia. And apart from the men of the foremost forts, the soldiers of Siberia were in general nothing but hooligans and robbers. They robbed, pillaged and murdered all the way to Yeniseisk, and on arrival there they tried to murder Khripunov himself. However, nothing daunted, he set out with these ruffians and a leavening of his own men and some men from Krasnoyarsk, and went up the Angara, preceded by a small advance party.

It was not long before things happened. The advance party sought news of silver mountains, heard nothing of such things, and decided instead to exact tribute from subject Evenki tribes. But this exaction of tribute was irregular, additional to the ordinary annual exaction; and by the time Khripunov's party came along the Evenki were up in arms. Khripunov for safety's sake had to build a small fort, still three days' journey from the Buryats' country, where he stayed till things quietened down.

Then he went on up the Angara. He found no sign of any silver or gold. The prospect of returning, and sending a report to Moscow that the expensive expedition had been quite fruitless, was alarming. While here, why not make

what hay was available while the sun shone? So instead of gathering red gold they gathered "soft gold"—furs—from Buryats and Evenki up and down the Angara and its tributaries. Back at their fort, Khripunov died; and most of his men returned to Yeniseisk with a load of plundered furs, a lot of lies about stories they had heard of silver mountains "farther on" than they had been, and a legacy of angry indignation among the Buryats and Evenki.

At the time of Khripunov's expedition, a party of Cossacks from Krasnoyarsk was raiding the Angara Buryats. The story of how they came to be there is interesting.

Krasnoyarsk was younger than Yeniseisk. It lay nearer the Buryats as the crow flies than Yeniseisk, but the path to them was more difficult than that from Yeniseisk up the Angara. Krasnoyarsk's supplies had to be brought through Yeniseisk.

In the feudal conditions of Russia, the governors of the two fortresses were rivals for the overlordship and exploitation of the Buryat country. Krasnoyarsk was at a disadvantage and felt it. Its supplies were cut so short by Yeniseisk that the Krasnoyarsk soldiers were eating the bark of trees, and selling their cattle to local natives for edible roots which the latter found in the forests.

The Cossacks of Krasnoyarsk, with the connivance of their governor, planned to make an alliance with the already restive peasant-colonists of Yeniseisk, raid that fortress and seize its supplies, and then proceed by the Yeniseisk route up the Angara to get what they could from the Buryats.

A Yeniseisk peasant gave them away, the raid on Yeniseisk failed, and the Cossacks had perforce to go on up the Angara "naked and barefoot and hungry," as they later wrote.

These desperate men were met by desperate Buryats. They fought three battles, and each time they beat the

Buryats and took prisoners. Eventually they returned, and on reaching Yeniseisk their sixty-nine prisoners, whom they had meant to sell as slaves, were taken from them with all loot and transferred to the account of Yeniseisk. These prisoners had been taken from the peoples of Bayarakan, Braatai and Kodogon—all tribute-paying lieges of the tsar.

These two expeditions, Khripunov's and that of the Krasnoyarsk men, had the natural result. Not only were the rank-and-file now so angry against the Russians that their taishas, for the sake of their own authority, must needs have taken the same attitude; but the taishas themselves had been robbed by the Russians, their tribute and allegiance had been shown to give them no protection—not even the "protection" that an American gangster now gives his victim "client." They sent word that they would pay no more tribute and owe no more allegiance.

To try to soothe them down and bring them back into the fold, Victor Savin was sent out to see Bayarakan, Braatai and Kodogon; he took with him Bayarakan's son, Kodogon's son and some Buryat women prisoners, and was to tell the three taishas that the Krasnoyarsk robbers and Khripunov's men had been punished, that the prisoners were being kept and well fed at Yeniseisk, and that they would be returned if the taishas would resume their allegiance. If the taishas disbelieved what Savin and Kodogon's son said, they were to be invited to send their own men to Yeniseisk to see the prisoners.

Alas for Savin! On the way he stopped at Koshevoi Yar, the fort that Khripunov had built. Here were still living a considerable part of Khripunov's original force, under the nominal headship of one Maxim Perfilyev. These Cossacks, recognising Bayarakan's son Buguldai as one of their captives, quarrelled with Savin. One of them murdered Buguldai

with a club, and when Savin protested he also was beaten. Thereupon the renegades ran amok, fifty of them seized three women prisoners whom Savin was to have returned to their homes, and one after another ravished them in the middle of the fort, in full view of the other Buryats. Savin was then thrown out, to deal with the taishas as best he could.

Kodogon received Savin calmly, for he got his own son back. But while Savin was there, Bayarakan arrived, seized Savin and carried him off, letting Savin's companion Anikiyev go free. Savin was held as hostage until all Buryat prisoners should be freed from Yeniseisk. Later, however, came word that Bayarakan had killed Savin, and was now seeking to recapture Anikiyev whom Kodogon had hidden. Enraged at not finding him, Bayarakan vented his fury on Evenki tribes who paid homage to the tsar, and ordered them to give no more tribute to the Russians, but to him.

The matter was eventually put in some order by a further expedition under Maxim Perflyev, a diplomatic and tactful individual who had considerable experience in dealing with the Buryats. At the head of a strong force, going with great caution, he first approached Kodogon and secured his allegiance—which was not difficult as Kodogon had not greatly suffered at the hands of the marauding Cossacks and was eager to resume his trade with the Russians. Kodogon, on Perflyev's behalf, talked to the other "revolting" taishas and persuaded them—even Bayarakan—to return to "the tsar's grace." Perflyev meanwhile seized the opportunity to build a new strong fort, this time right in Kodogon's territory. Perflyev wanted to find out details of the taishas' followers (the Russians were already beginning to wonder why they should merely share the exploitation of the tribesmen with the taishas) but dared not, for fear that the taishas

might guess the reason for his questions. For the time being he likewise "forgot" his governor's orders to find Savin's "murderer," though Kodogon had told him the "criminal" was Bayarakan's brother.

Perfilyev was ordered to go on up the Angara, if possible to Baikal; but he, knowing the state of affairs, told the governor that the authorities should be satisfied for the present with what had been done, as farther up the Angara were "many Brats who want to battle with the Russians." He stayed where he was.

He was wise. The taishas had gone too far in making peace with the Russians in their desire for Russian trade, they had miscalculated the strength of their followers' feelings. The ordinary tribesmen got no benefit of any kind from Russian "protection" and suzerainty. Unlike their taishas, they received no presents from the tsar. Their wives, brothers, children were taken as hostages by the Russians—and the taishas bought the freedom only of their own relations, never troubling about the families of the ordinary tribesmen; the tribesmen's people were even seized and sent into slavery, to be bought and sold in the markets of Siberia and Russia. And when Perfilyev brought back Kodogon's daughter and the son of Kodogon's brother-taisha Kotogor, the ordinary Buryat was not especially enthusiastic in his gratitude for this generosity. They grew more and more determined to resist the Cossacks. Moreover, the Evenki tribes which had accepted Russian domination in place of that of the Buryat taishas in the hope that it would prove a lighter burden, found that the opposite was the case, and began to show their discontent in what the Cossack tribute-gatherers termed "disorderliness." From this time onwards for several years the story of the Angara was one in which the taishas by turns broke off relations with the Russians and attacked them when the masses of ordinary Buryats

forced them to do so; or returned to homage, tribute and trade whenever their internal politics permitted it; or, fearing seizure of themselves or their relations as hostages when the Russians were beating them in battle, fled, leaving the ordinary people to bear the Russian revenge; or, when things were going worse still, left their homelands altogether and went to Mongolia, but taking care that with them went their followers on the exploitation of whom they depended.

Soon after Perfilyev returned to Yeniseisk, word was received that the Buryats would no longer pay tribute and, in fact, directly challenged the Russians to war, threatening to attack the new Bratsk Fort in all their force with that of their kishtyms. The Cossacks of Bratsk also learned to their dismay that the Evenki had agreed to attack them whenever they left the fort to gather tribute, to hunt or to fish. So they stayed in the fort, using up their stores. They did not take up the Buryat challenge to a fight.

Yeniseisk sent six more soldiers together with more hostages—Kotogor's son and a relative of Kodogon—and many presents for the taishas, including some for Bayarakan. The taishas showed their pleasure plainly enough but the pressure of their people was so great that they gave in return only a very small tribute, so that Yeniseisk felt the bargain a decidedly bad one; moreover, the leader of the Cossack party reported back, "The Brats are not in the least in awe of the tsar. They will not be quietened by His Majesty's threat of force, and tribute from them will not be as good as that from other peoples"—as indeed it was not. The furs sent to Yeniseisk were poor, summer ones (the best furs are obtained in winter).

From bad to worse. The Russian present-giving over, the Buryat tribesmen redoubled the pressure on the taishas. Even the kishtyms now began not only to refuse tribute to



the Russians, but actually robbed a party of tribute-collectors of everything they possessed so that they nearly died of starvation; while in the Buryat settlements the collectors were openly cursed, were not allowed a tent to sleep in though it was winter-time, suffered robbery and insult. The men of Bratsk Fort, meanwhile, were running short of food, and with this added to the difficulties and dangers surrounding them were showing signs of mutiny. Finally, in 1632, some kishtyms told the Cossacks that large numbers of Buryats were going to attack the fort during the winter when the river was frozen, and try to burn it down. After this the hungry Russians remained strictly within the fort. Soon they learned that a force of a hundred Buryats from Baikal under their taisha Kogun had come to join Kodogon, and were having long discussions on an unknown subject the nature of which the Cossacks did not care to guess. Bayarakan had now ordered Buryats living near the fort to kill any Russians that they met; and Evenki kishtyms who had been paying tribute to the Russians were now gathered together by the Buryats and taken off to live at the latter's encampments.

Yeniseisk sent what reinforcements it could: a miserable sixteen men under Chermeninov. Though the tension continued, this officer sent collectors to taishas Kodogon, Koto-gor, Braatai and Negutai. The taishas at first refused tribute, threatened the collectors and detained them for a fortnight, though finally they were allowed to depart with furs so few and so poor as to be "laughable," according to the archives. But after their release, it became obvious that the Buryats meant to ambush them; and they only escaped back to the fort by the help of a Buryat tribesman to whom they had returned his hostage son. After this, Chermeninov sent out no more collectors. And shortly after Bayarakan himself raided the immediate vicinity of the fort to show his power

to the local Evenki and forbid them to have anything to do with the Russians, on pain of death.

The governor at Yeniseisk sent an urgent appeal back to Tomsk for reinforcements. A strong troop set out in June, 1633, from that town, but did not reach Yeniseisk till autumn and so returned to Tomsk! Only next June, in 1634, in answer to Chermeninov's tearful appeals, was the Yeniseisk governor able to send sixty men with fire-arms.

These men were under Vasilyev, who was ordered to take a strong line with the recalcitrant taishas. He set out in June, 1634, and in the autumn word came that he had seen Kodogon, who agreed to resume tribute but would not answer for the other taishas and their people. Even Kodogon categorically refused to give hostages in return for slaves brought back by Vasilyev: the slaves were of Kodogon's people, but not his own relations, and he would do nothing to return them to their own folk.

Suddenly the dark clouds which had been growing all these years began to gather together into an ominous pile. Hardly had Kodogon left, when an Evenki brought word that the Buryats were preparing for war. Hard on his heels came hurrying messengers to say that the tribes were mustering their forces and had gathered in all their kishtyms. Yeniseisk received an urgent appeal, and the governor asked for troops to be sent from Tomsk on skis: but after Vasilyev's appeal there was silence from the Angara, until in next June came two ragged, hungry soldiers down the river to tell the story. The gathering storm had broken at last. Vasilyev and his whole garrison had been suddenly attacked and wiped out to a man. His fort had been razed to the ground. The two men who brought the news had escaped because Vasilyev had just sent them off with a message to Yeniseisk, and they heard of the catastrophe on the way. The only

witnesses of the fight and annihilation of the garrison were the Buryats themselves.

The battle lived for centuries in Buryat folk-lore. According to one version Vasilyev's men separated into two parts. One, under Vasilyev himself, went to the mouth of the Oka, and while examining the possibility of building a new fort there they were surrounded and killed. The rest of the force came up later, and the Buryats decided to finish the lot; they invited the unknowing Russians to a feast on an island in the river, promising them tribute. On the island they made the Russians drunk and attacked them; the Cossacks tried to swim to the bank, but were all killed, and the stream here became known as "Bloody River." After killing them, the Buryats burnt the fort.

A further legend adds that the victorious Buryats, "according to custom, piled the dead Cossacks with their arms on a funeral pyre. In the flames the fire-arms exploded, killing some of the Buryats. The others were puzzled and alarmed. One of their shamans said, 'As one cannot cut down the forest with a single axe, so one cannot kill the people of the world with a bow and arrow,' meaning "You cannot annihilate the Russians—burn some, and others will appear.' Whereupon by the shamans' advice the Buryats decided to cease resisting the Russians."

A different version says the Buryats "gathered together in general assembly. On the prophecy of the shaman Onokhoi and on the advice of the wise man Olongoi they decided to accept subjection to the Russian White Tsar. They declared their submission, and as mark of their loyalty brought to their conquerors an ermine-skin and a polecat, taken from the costume of their shaman. They asked for these to be sent to the White Tsar, saying 'This is our first tribute.'"

Maybe the shaman-taishas did persuade general assemblies

of Buryats to submit to the tsar. But the decision was not a firm one.<sup>1</sup>

## § 2

THE annihilation of Vasilyev and his garrison was the high peak of the Buryat people's resistance to the foreign colonisers. Moscow took revenge by sending a strong force which went up and down the Angara destroying Buryat settlements, slaughtering and enslaving men and women and children, while the taishas hastened to resume their profitable relations with the Russians and told their people it was impossible with bow and arrow to resist the Cossacks' "empty tubes from which comes smoke so that we die." But, nevertheless, the echoes of the great explosion rumbled for long around the valleys and over the steppes. It was long before the Russians and taishas had erased from the people's memory the fact that by united force they had inflicted a great defeat on the "unconquerable" men of the "White Tsar." Though Russian domination now swiftly extended as far as the Balagansk steppes, it was only shaky, and in 1638—three years after Vasilyev's men were wiped out—the Buryats rose again, in hardly less strength than before.

This time the Buryats of the Angara, Oka and Uda together with Evenki formed an alliance and besieged the new Oka fort which replaced the one that the Buryats destroyed. The rising and siege, although unsuccessful, were not decisively beaten, and had a tremendous effect through all eastern Siberia. The kishtym tribes flocked back to the Buryat fold and away from the Russian—though, perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that at the time of writing—Spring, 1942—the pro-Fascist ruling clique of France headed by Marshal Pétain is following a policy towards the conquering Hitler closely analogous to that of the Buryat taishas towards the Cossacks, and for closely analogous motives, though on an immeasurably vaster scale.

their relations with the Buryats became now less those of kishtyms with overlords and more those of allies. Even in Yakutia, far down the Lena to the north, the Buryats' determined fight produced a similar liberation movement among the Yakuts and Evenki and other tribes who allied themselves with them (and here again, as the Cossacks noted, the "elders," the so-to-speak embryonic taishas, were against the revolt, which was led by "the young men"). On the Angara, those Evenki who still maintained relations with the Russians were threatened and even raided by the Buryats for breaking the united anti-Cossack front. In these circumstances, as long as the rank-and-file felt it possible to resist the Russians, it was difficult for the taishas to go openly against the current.

And they were more inclined to go with the current because the soldiers of Krasnoyarsk were now continually raiding those Buryats who were reckoned to be within the territory of Yeniseisk; they were caught between two forts, each claiming tribute in return for "protection" (even against the Cossacks of the rival fort!). But unfortunately for the tribesmen, the taishas began to utilise the division in the Russian front for their own purposes; they conducted their own raids, under the auspices of one fort or the other, against other Buryats who claimed the "protection" of the rival fort. Thus some taishas became enriched, the rank-and-file all round suffered, and the Buryat united front tended to break up into chaos greater than that in the Russian camp.

The taishas were, of course, able to do this because the rank-and-file had no idea even that a united front existed. It had grown up, not in any organised way, but simply through the automatic process of general oppression evoking general defensive search for allies. Thus taishas would often be able to represent to their followers that the men of, say,

Krasnoyarsk were really good fellows, as much the enemies of the Yeniseisk robbers as they were themselves, while taisha So-and-so and his men who were friendly to Yeniseisk were traitors and should be treated as such. For this reason it is true to say that the raids of Buryats upon Buryats during this time were probably an expression of the Buryats' dumb striving for unity against the foreign oppressors.

The taishas in their ruthless greed and unscrupulousness did do much to destroy the Buryats' unity. And from 1644, when Pokhabov became governor of Bratsk Fort, the Russian progress became more rapid. After enlarging and strengthening the fort, Pokhabov took a force of men clean up the Angara, across Baikal and two days' journey up the Selenga towards Mongolia. In his report to the tsar come with monotonous repetition the words: "And these foreigners (*i.e.* non-Russians) fought with us your servants, and we your servants by the grace of God and to Your Majesty's honour killed many of their people and took more than forty men and women as slaves, and after the fight these foreigners said: this summer we have no tribute to give you, but we will pay in winter."

After a brief spell under the "more diplomatic" Perflyev, the Buryats showed signs of gathering against the Russians again, and Pokhabov returned to the Angara to "pacify" them once more. (It is comic to note that the stories of the "silver mountain" now located it beyond Baikal, and Pokhabov was actually instructed by Moscow in the search for it to "explore the Chinese country"!)

Pokhabov then built a new fort on the Osa, a small tributary far up the Angara, and the Buryats of the Angara and Oka were thus now threatened in the rear. From this time they paid tribute more regularly. On the other hand, the new Osa fort was surrounded by Buryats still hostile and unsubjugated; though Pokhabov had battle with them and defeated them, they did

not pay tribute but simply withdrew from their settlement and remained unsubjugated.

At the same time, the Buryats of the Angara were finding themselves dominated from a third direction from the Lena in the East. After establishing a fort at Ust-Kut the Cossacks advanced southward up the Lena, although the local Evenki were forbidden by the Buryats to submit to the Russians. Beketov set out with an expedition to conquer this country, and reached as far as the Kulenga, where he entrenched himself and sent a summons to the Buryats to come to submit and pay tribute. They came, and by a trick entered the temporary fort, intending to kill the Russians. Beketov, however, realising what was happening, and the Cossacks killed forty of them and wounded many more before they could strike. The Buryats' comrades near by prepared to take revenge, but Beketov and his men took the horses of those whom they had killed, and escaped by riding for twenty-four hours without a halt.

A later expedition was more successful. Marching on snowshoes, the Russians took the Buryats by surprise and overcame them. They spoke through an interpreter to taisha Shivshinei, proposing that he make submission and pay tribute. Shivshinei, however, showed himself one of the very few taishas determined to have nothing to do with the Russians. "Angrily he told them, 'So you do not know what sort of a man I am! Alive I shall not yield to you, Cossacks.' He went into his dwelling and began shooting arrows at the Russians. The Cossacks returned his fire with gun-shots, but could not enter the dwelling, so set it afire. Shivshinei, refusing to surrender, was burnt to death with his son," says a Buryat legend with which the Cossacks report agrees. Shivshinei by this heroic death covered his memory in glory: the Buryats never forgot him, and so popular a figure did he become that generations afterwards

the taishas who governed the Buryats for the Russians used to claim descent from him, to bolster up their authority.

Shivshinei's brother Kurzhum, to whom the post of taisha now went, later took up the struggle; but he was not of Shivshinei's stuff, for though he fought a hard fight it was mainly in the hope of releasing his son who had been taken hostage. When the attack failed, Kurzhum submitted to Russian suzerainty, and Verkholensk Fort was built to consolidate the position. Under a cruel and stupid governor, Ivanov, the men of this fort kept raiding the Buryats of the Angara steppes, who formed a league with their kinsmen of the Lena, together with the kishtyms. This same Ivanov made a "progrom," or massacre, of Buryats living on Olkhon Island in Baikal; he failed to take hostages because all the "best people" (in the Cossack's phrase) had fled, leaving the tribesmen to their fate. The Buryat survivors now joined the Angara-Lena league. That local Evenki also participated is shown by the fact that some of Ivanov's men went up the Upper Angara—the north-eastern affluent of Baikal—and were wiped out by the Evenki. The confederacy of the Angara steppes besieged Verkholensk in 1644, and although driven away by Russian reinforcements they carried off all Verkholensk's cattle.

Even next year a "pacifying" expedition, after defeating three Buryat tribes, found the people gathering against them in large numbers, and had difficulty in getting safely back to the fort. In 1648 Verkholensk, together with Ilimsk and Ust-Kut, were all unsuccessfully besieged, and it was not until the following year that the Cossacks finally broke up the confederacy in a terrible campaign from which the Buryats of the Upper Lena almost to a man fled to Mongolia—leaving the Russians with no one to pay them tribute. In Mongolia they were appropriated as vassals by the feudal khans, which the Buryat taishas found even more intolerable



than their position in their homeland, while their tribesmen found themselves to be no better than kishtyms or even slaves. So in 1655 they returned home and submitted to the Russians. "The descendants of Bulagat," says the Buryat legend, "refused to pay tribute to the Russians and fled. But the Russians caught them and threw them in the water."

Meanwhile Pokhabov, basing himself on his new Angara fort at the mouth of the Osa, raided again far beyond Baikal, up the Selenga and its tributaries, built a fort at Kultuk on the marshes at the foot of Baikal, and thence subjugated the Buryats of the Irkut. Later he again left the Osa to build a further new fort higher up still; but he left so few men at Osa Fort, with such small supplies, that the Buryats of the Angara and Oka saw a chance of renewing their alliance; the wretched Cossacks fled from the fort, which the Buryats promptly burnt down, leaving no trace of it. Once more they presented a solid bloc. Pokhabov had even reduced the garrison of Bratsk Fort, with the result that only those Buryats living in its immediate vicinity now paid tribute. Its governor now became one Olen, who already had a bad name amongst the Buryats and who proceeded to live up to it. The Buryats of the Angara and Oka left the district, taking their tribute with them; and shortly afterwards Olen received warning that they were planning to make a surprise night attack on the fort and repeat their victory over Vasil'yev's garrison. They grew into a considerable force, other sections of the Buryats and large numbers of Evenki joining the Angara-Oka league. The leaders were Bayarakan, Kotogor, Baakhai and other prominent taishas.

Large Russian reinforcements were sent from Yeniseisk, and Beketov even led a new expedition up the Angara. Beyond the Osa he had to fight a force of Buryats, who, although defeated, threatened Beketov: "We shall beat you

at the mouth of the Belaya, and if we don't beat you there we shall beat you further up or beyond the sea!" At the Belaya the Cossacks again won, but on nearing Baikal they found facing them such a large Buryat force that they took to the river, set sail and passed the Buryats without attempting to give battle and subjugate them. This Buryat force included men not only from the Angara and Oka, but from the Upper Lena (Bulagats and Ekhirits) and even from Olkhon Island on Baikal. The whole country seemed to be uniting against the invaders.

The league was once more broken up in 1653, when after a big battle the Russians captured several leaders including a woman, the wife of a Lena taisha called Torom. Using her as a lever, the Cossacks forced Torom to act as their intermediary, especially with the Bulagats. The reason for the interest in the Bulagats was that the Russians had learned that Mongol merchants were regularly visiting them; and the Russians wanted to open trade relations with these Mongols as well as to get tribute from the rich Bulagat taishas; moreover the Russians were now seeking land suitable for agricultural colonising, and the "Balagansk" (*i.e.* Bulagat) steppes looked promising from this point of view. In 1654 Balagansk Fort was built, and the same year some of the land surrounding was put under the plough.

While Yeniseisk was happily contemplating the rich prospects that now seemed to be before their eyes, the Bulagat Buryats who had been defeated turned for help to Krasnoyarsk. They had earlier sent to Krasnoyarsk, made their homage, promised to pay tribute, and asked the governor to build a fort amongst them "to collect their tribute and to protect them from raiders from Yeniseisk and Bratsk!" The governor, still smarting from having to play very second fiddle to Yeniseisk and envying the latter centre's income of

furs and slaves from its rapidly extending dominion, jumped at the idea. His men were already raiding, robbing and carrying off not merely Buryats "belonging" to Yeniseisk, Bratsk and Balagansk, but even the Cossack tribute-collectors of those forts. The fort was built, but during the general rising of about 1650 the Buryats turned on the Krasnoyarsk men and killed many of their collectors. Nevertheless, when the Bulagats were defeated on the Angara in 1653 by the Russians of Bratsk, they sent a new envoy, the taisha Uzum, to Krasnoyarsk and again besought help, which was granted. While taisha Baakhai, "protected" by Yeniseisk, raided Buryat settlements within Krasnoyarsk's limited territory, the commander of Krasnoyarsk garrison named Yarlykov likewise raided Bratsk territory; and when Cossacks from the new Balagansk Fort came to Krasnoyarsk to complain about the behaviour of Yarlykov the latter's answer was to order the Krasnoyarsk guns to be fired at them. In 1654 things came to such a pass that a Krasnoyarsk sub-fort at Udinsk and the local Buryats were raided by Cossacks from Balagansk together with Baakhai and his Buryats; whereupon Krasnoyarsk Cossacks and Buryats made a return raid on Baakhai. The chaos grew, and with it the Buryat tribesmen fell into worse and worse economic condition, robbed from all sides as they were, until in the words of the Balagansk governor they were "out of their mind," and a tendency showed signs of appearing of the Buryats uniting again in a struggle against both Krasnoyarsk and Yeniseisk.

Nevertheless, armed resistance by the Buryats had now in the main been crushed by the help of the taishas' greed and treachery; and a chain of forts was rapidly established, to hold the country down, at Barguzinsk (on the Barguzin river east of Baikal), Verkhne-Angarsk (on the Upper Angara, which flows into the northern tip of Baikal), Irkutsk (on the Angara proper a little way below its exit from Baikal),

Selenginsk and Verkhne-Udinsk (on the Selenga river flowing into Baikal from the south), Nerchinsk (east of Buryatia, in the upper Amur watershed) and, in 1674, Tunkinsk (up the Irkut, in the Tunka alps). The Russians proceeded from conquest of the Buryats to their full-scale exploitation.

## BURYAT REBELLION (1660)

THE ANGARA WAS now conquered. But the Cossacks' greed was so blind that the country soon became an empty desert, of little profit to the tsar. The Russian authorities did not kill the goose that laid the golden eggs: they tried to squeeze so many surplus eggs out of it that it took wing and flew away—suddenly, overnight.

A principal commander of that time on the Angara was Pokhabov, who was a nobleman with high connections at Moscow. On the Angara he was a law unto himself, combining in his person the functions of policeman, judge and even executioner. He was interested in the Angara not as a source of profit to the tsar or to the State, but as a source of profit to himself. As he remarked to one who remonstrated with him for his rapaciousness, "What happens after me does not matter to me. Though no grass grows here to-morrow when I have left, to-day I have been satisfied." He took great pains to see that he was "satisfied."

He imposed special taxes on Russian peasants and Buryats, taxes so high that they could not pay; and as punishment for non-payment he confiscated their best—even their last—horse or cow or sheep; when he was still not "satisfied," he tortured them until they presented him with a substantial "gift." The "gift" might be livestock, or a valuable object such as an outstanding ikon, or money, or a son or daughter as a slave—whom he then took by force, whatever the sex, to his bed. When the Buryat taishas paid their regular requisite visits, he made them bring their wives; he made the taisha drunk and then forced the wife. His own soldiers returning from expeditions found that he took from them

most of the Buryat slaves and booty they had captured. He became, indeed, one of the biggest slave-dealers in Siberia. In 1652 he went too far, and openly robbed the State coffers in his charge for his own purposes. He was disgraced, but by influence in Moscow was back again in 1658. He developed a roaring trade in beer and wine, from his own factory. Food stores that he brought from Yeniseisk for Bratsk Fort never arrived: on the road he sold them, and the Cossacks went on short rations; ninety men starved to death as a result. Russians who had reported his behaviour during his first governorship were now especially badly treated. So were any peasants who, knowing how to read and write, were suspected of preparing the peasants' complaints against him. On his approach or that of his officers, many peasants fled headlong into the forest to die of hunger.

His treatment of the Buryats was even more brutal than of the Russians, and a feeling of desperation rose among the tribesmen. In this, the taishas were now with them, for "Bagaba-Khan" (Pokhabov) had not only shamed their wives and daughters; he had extorted from them far more than the regular tribute; he had usurped their trade for his own benefit, dealing directly with tribesmen instead of with the taisha; and he had cut off the alternative trade between the Buryat taishas and the Mongols. He had robbed them, and given nothing in return but shame.

They secretly met assemblies of the Russian peasant colonisers. According to the later statements of these peasants, the Buryats wanted to know: "In your Russia also do governors behave in this way, seizing other men's wives to their beds and taking their cattle by force?" to which the Cossacks had to reply that in Russia such behaviour was reckoned as banditry. But it seems hardly likely that either Russians or Buryats would take the risk of secret meetings merely to clear up this point of inquiry. Probably

more went on than the peasants cared to reveal in their later statements.

Some of the official interpreters, who were closer to the Buryats than any others of the Russian forces, actually helped the Buryats to make out official complaints to Moscow against Pokhabov. But the only result was to draw his wrath down upon themselves, interpreters and Buryats alike.

Suddenly a section of the soldiery revolted against Pokhabov's own men, and fighting broke out. Pokhabov ordered the taisha Dakhai with his men to attack the rebels. Dakhai refused, and shortly afterwards—on 5th June, 1658—a complaint against Pokhabov was sent off jointly by the peasantry and several taishas, in which the taishas threatened to quit the district and go to Mongolia with their followers.

In the meantime, the khans and merchants of Mongolia had been watching events. Seeing their chance, they sent a force of three hundred men under Abavak and his brother Badan, who came for secrecy's sake by the "winter route" (by lake Kossogol, across the Sayan mountains and down the Oka). Abavak came to Dakhai and other Buryat taishas and ordered them with all their people to come to Mongolia; they had brought with them sheep as food stores. If they refused, they would be annihilated. It was following the Mongols' orders that the Buryats threatened to quit the country.

The Mongols knew their men precisely; for in the extraordinary rivalry which still, and for long after, continued between the Russian forts, the commander of Balagansk Fort had freely given the Mongols permission, and had even helped them, to collect tribute from those Buryats who were reckoned as coming within the territory of the Upper Lena Fort (Verkholensk) and who had paid tribute to the khans before the Russian conquest!

The taishas of the Buryats were keen on the idea of fleeing

to Mongolia. Mongolia was a country of well-established feudalism, where they themselves, as they hoped, would be recognised as feudal lords and where they might be able to rid themselves of the democratic restrictions on their power which the survivals of clan-society imposed on them. They were ready to go.

But their clansmen were not. Despite all the repressions, brutalities and cruelties of Pokhabov and his men, the masses of the Buryats had a very strong attachment to their tribal territory. As so often in human history, the people were far more patriotic than their rulers. No doubt it was in the expectation of this popular opposition that the Mongol khans had sent such a remarkably strong force, for those times, as three hundred armed men, which made practical resistance impossible.

One poor Buryat named Azigidai escaped from the taishas' guard with his mother and sister, but leaving his brother in taisha Dakhai's hands. He fled to the Russians—there was nowhere else he could go—and the same day (28th June) Dakhai with his followers left their encampment on the Oka to go off with the Mongols, together with all other Oka Buryats. A week before, all the Balagansk Buryats had gone, leaving the Unga and Osa valleys empty; and it was while Pokhabov was searching for them that the Oka taishas seized their chance to flee. Azigidai told the Russians that many of the Buryats had gone with the Mongols "unwillingly."

Actually before going a party of Buryats came to Bratsk Fort to try to recover some hostages, relatives of the taishas. But the Mongols were impatient and would not permit a lengthy siege, or even a battle of which the outcome might be doubtful, and the Buryats left again—having created, however, a deep impression on the Russians in the fort by their bold arrival in small numbers.

In Mongolia the ordinary Buryats now found themselves



to be the mere serfs of the feudal khans. Buryats from Verkholensk sent by the Russians to try to persuade the refugees to return, reported on their return that "We asked them why they had betrayed His Majesty, and from what oppression at Balagan'sk Fort they had fled, and why they ceased to pay tribute. And with many bitter tears they told us, 'We would be glad to live under His Majesty's high arm and pay tribute, but for the most cruel oppression of the captains of Ivan Pokhabov, which Pokhabov caused us great sufferings.'"

Pokhabov was dismissed and recalled for trial; but he escaped his escort, lay low for a while and eventually evaded punishment. Meanwhile, in 1660, an expedition of Cossack was sent out to fetch back the departed Buryats—"by persuasion, or failing that by force." On the Irkut, however they met a Buryat called Moksoika, who told them the refugees, numbering more than five hundred, were living "beyond the range," and the Mongol lords "have set up guard-posts to prevent them from making any attempt to return to their own land and to guard the road against Russian soldiers." The expedition felt itself too weak, and returned home. Another expedition got as far as the middle of the Sayan Range, somewhere near Lake Kosso-Gol, where winter descended, and "in the Range great snows fell, and we were seized by fierce frosts and deadly hunger and the road was impassable." Their horses began to die. Struggling out of Mongolia, the Cossacks had to leave the sick horses and march afoot. Tired-out horses were killed and eaten. They were even reduced to chewing the leather of the boots and kit. They just managed to get back, scared, tattered and starving, to Balagansk.

As news of Pokhabov's dismissal spread, some of the Buryats in Mongolia returned, for the oppression of the Mongol khans was little if any lighter than that of the Rus-

sians. Buryats of the Khongodor clan, according to legend, discussed whether they should flee from Mongolia back to Buryatia, and came to the conclusion: "Our khan cuts off the heads of transgressors, but the Russian tsar has them beaten with birch-rods. Let us return home to submission to the White Tsar of Russia."

Yet despite all the commands from Moscow to treat the Buryats better, the local Russian authorities continued to regard the tribesmen as "fair game," and each fort still looked on the others as rivals in the exploitation of the Buryats until the territories of each fort were laid down and "frontiers" of the "ridings" were established. Nevertheless, the returning stream of Buryats from Mongolia continued—despite a raid in 1669 by the Buryat taisha Omegen from Mongolia, who vainly tried to force his brother Inkei of Balagansk to return with him to the southern steppes. (Inkei, who had already paid a short visit to Mongolia and seen the conditions there, replied, "I go not to Mongolia, I shall die in my own land.") Mongolia was now in the throes of internecine warfare which was laying waste the country, and in 1667 there was a mass flight of Buryats back to Buryatia. To prevent further flights the khans built stronger guard-posts or forts, and the refugees whom they caught they tortured severely as a lesson to others. One such refugee group of a hundred men was chased by the Mongol guards and caught, many were killed and the rest taken back, only two escaping to continue the journey. A Mongol expedition said to number 10,000 armed men into Tannu-Tuva gave a chance for a large number of Buryats to dash over the Sayan Range, though some were caught by the Mongol guards.

The returning Buryats as a matter of fact were apparently helped to some extent by the lower ranks of the Mongols themselves, who were likewise greatly discontented with the

ruinous wars and the savage, greedy oppression of their khans. To them, as to the Buryats, the Russian tsar in the distance seemed a benevolent ruler as compared with the khans. "The Russian tsars," they used to whisper round their camp-fires, "are real Boddhisatvas, wondrously holy and most gentle-hearted beings; and the Russian people through the angelic goodness of his heart are so rich that they fasten their horses with silver bridles. He himself eats from golden vessels and his dogs from silver ones. He lays sables on the floor in place of carpets, and lights the stove with butter from cow's milk. Even the children who look after the cattle are permitted to play with fat sheeps'-tails instead of the usual Mongol balls." The flow of Buryats back to homage to the "angelic" tsar grew stronger, and with them they sometimes brought friendly groups of Mongols. They often found that their old tribal territory was now occupied by Russian colonisers.

## COLONISATION: RUSSO-BURYAT REVOLT

AFTER THE CONQUEST of Buryatia had been completed, a period of thirty to forty years of comparative "peace" followed: a period of consolidation of the Russian power, during which exploitation of the country and of its inhabitants began in earnest. In addition to the forts at Bratsk, Barguzinsk (east shore of Baikal) and Verkhne-Angarsk (northern tip of Baikal) new ones were built at Irkutsk (near where the Angara leaves Baikal) in 1652; Balagansk (on the Angara), 1653; Nerchinsk (east of Buryatia), 1654; Selenginsk (on the Selenga river, between Baikal and the Mongol frontier), 1665; Verkhne-Udinsk (lower down the Selenga, nearer Baikal), 1665; and Tunka (in the high south-western ranges), 1674. During this period, the Buryat aristocracy went over unreservedly to the side of the Russian conquerors, shaming the memory of those few of their ancestors who had been too proud to submit. Their overwhelming desire was to maintain some remnant of their position as feudal aristocrats, their privileges among the Buryat people, and their ability to live in wealthy ease at the expense of their tribes. Further resistance to the Russians meant ruin and death; a compact with the Russians would secure them; so they made the compact.

They perhaps knew that the conquerors needed them. Almost every conqueror needs native puppets to run his administration of conquered peoples for him, and the tsar's voyevodas or governors were no exception. Though the Buryat lords were placed only on the level of knights in the Russian feudal hierarchy, they were left in possession of their tribes and even obtained considerable extensions of their privileges. For example, they often received the sole

right to use better pastures which formerly were in the possession of whole clans. The Buryat tribesmen hated these puppets, for the conquest had gone far to destroy the responsibilities which, under old tribal law, the aristocrat had had to bear towards the tribe or clan, and which had largely persisted despite all his efforts before the conquest. The degenerate, demoralised puppet "taishas," "zaisans" and "shulengas" were thus cut off from the life and sympathy of their poorer fellow-Buryats, and like gangsters began a career of wholesale and cruel robbery of the tribesmen.

A Buryat legend tells, in words exaggerated by depth of hatred, of such a puppet named Boshko, who ruled Buryats in the Tunka alps in south-west Buryatia. "The Russians appointed Boshko of the Durton clan as administrator. He was empowered to rule the people as he wished, to judge and sentence criminals as he thought fit; and he was only ordered to deliver to Irkutsk those whom he considered guilty of plotting and treason—either original Buryats or Buryats newly returning from Mongolia—and also to see to it that there were no flights to Mongolia.

"From the start Boshko ruled harshly, inspiring fear and enforcing absolute obedience. He became known as 'hattu-hulitai-noyon'—'the ruler of the heavy hand.' He distinguished himself and darkened his career by the following activities: his severity and harshness went to such lengths that, angered by so trivial a matter as, for example, the crossing of his path by a woman, he seized her (if she were young), cut off her breasts with his own hand, cooked and ate them. On his approach the people, especially the women, would fly into the forest. If they could not take the children with them, they locked them in the hut. But Boshko would catch the little boy on a fish-hook thrown through the smoke-hole, pull him out, cook and eat him. For this he was called 'myakhata-shulma'—'cannibal-demon.'

"Despite his dreadful cruelties and unheard-of abuse of power, no one dared complain, because he had not been chosen by the people but specially appointed by the Russians with unlimited power. Moreover, he spoke Russian perfectly, which was a great advantage to him and gave him the confidence of the administration.

"At that time there lived in the Kurkut district two brothers, Luta and Kirkha, of the Barshukha clan. Boshko by a trick got hold of Luta's little son and took him home to eat him. Luta followed, meaning to get the boy back or kill Boshko. He got the boy back, but did not kill Boshko, considering, 'If I kill Boshko, I myself and all my family will perish, for the Russians will never forgive the killing of their representative.'"

The Buryat tribesmen sang in low voices round their fires:

"Rather than come close to the noyon

Better make friends with a dog.

The noyon will betray,

The dog will be faithful.

Anger not the noyon or you will pay with your back—

Anger the dog and you will pay with your ankle."

And it is worth noting on this song that the dogs of a Buryat camp are by English standards extremely fierce and treacherous!

The noyons, in fact, were engaged by the Russian conquerors to do their dirty work for them. This work consisted primarily in seeing that the flow of fur-tribute kept up and even increased. But while the Russian demands were rising, the Buryat tribes had been losing their power to collect the furs to pay the tribute. They were no longer able themselves to levy tribute on their former kishtym vassals of the forest tribes: they could only buy the hunter's furs—if the hunter, indeed, had any left over after he had paid his own tribute

to the Russians. Moreover, the Buryat had little to offer the hunter in exchange for his furs; for the goods produced by the Buryats were no competitors against those offered by Russian traders, and the Russians had taken care to shut off the supply of superior Chinese and Bokhara goods which the Buryats had formerly used for trade. While the Buryat tribesmen were thus reduced to penury, their noyons meanwhile were highly attracted by the tempting Russian goods, and therefore pressed the tribesmen still more in order to get the wherewithal to purchase them—especially in view of the loss of the *kishtyms'* tribute. As one means of increasing the income, the noyon resorted to usury. Where a man of his tribe was in difficulties, he would—purely in the way of "mutual tribal help"—lend him money at rates up to fifty per cent. per annum. When the poor man failed to pay the interest, the noyon—again, of course, as a special mark of tribe friendship—would suggest that he pay back half the loan in free labour over several years.

How the Buryats hated their noyons is shown by the fact that when, in 1695, a Christian Buryat noble named Peter Taishin deserted from Irkutsk and fled to Mongolia, a force of Buryat tribesmen gladly participated in pursuing him.

Apart from the general tribute, the Buryats had to support a special tribute "from nomad aliens"; capital tax and State land levy; fines imposed on communities for misdemeanours of individuals; regional land levy; forest tax; and several other levies. They were made responsible for State duties (road-building and maintenance, the postillion stations, etc.). They were morally forced to pay great sums to the Russian administrators in the way of "presents" something like the payments made to an American gangster by his "clients" for his "protection"; from 1811 to 1819 the Irkutsk governor, Treskin, thus reaped a golden harvest of 86,000 roubles.

During the period of early development of the colonisation

of Buryatia, peasants were imported from European Russia in order to stabilise the country and raise the proportion of inhabitants dependably loyal to the tsar. From the Government's general point of view that was a far-seeing policy: but the Government's point of view was not that of the local governors, who regarded the people, Russian or Buryat, as a means of their own enrichment. As Stepniak remarks in *The Russian Peasantry*, the local rulers exercised a beautiful impartiality as between the Russians and native people in their robbery. The Russian peasants, and even the lower orders of the administration itself, suffered severely from the rapaciousness of the nobles, and this tended to throw them into common cause with the rank-and-file Buryat tribesmen. Moreover, during this period the kulaks or rich peasants had not yet had time to develop, to split the ranks and to turn the peasantry against the Buryats, while moreover the colonisation had not yet gone so far that the peasants were being given the lands vital to the Buryats.

Such, then, was the development of relations leading up to an explosive situation about the end of the seventeenth century.

The first shadow of the coming events was the growth of what might be called "Robin Hood-ism." In the 1680's in the Tunka alps (that same district where Boshko "cannibal-demon" had ruled for the Russians) arose an outlaw stronghold. Here, in the almost inaccessible mountains, lived Buryats and Mongols who refused to obey Russian or Buryat noyons or Mongol khans. In 1689 a band of these men robbed an important caravan of Bokhara merchants accompanied by envoys of Galdan, the khan of the Oirats who was at that time ravaging Mongolia. The affair caused quite an international "incident."

The best known of these Buryat outlaws of the hills was one Bogachei, a non-Christian. He was no noyon, but a



common tribesman who, with his clan, threw off the yoke of tribute and began a hard, dangerous but free life as a band in the hills. They had no autocratic noyon; Bogachei was simply the military leader, and decisions must have been taken round the camp-fire. For six years, from 1693 to 1698, Bogachei and his men lived this life. They robbed the Russian administrators and the Buryat noyons alike, with an impartiality equal to that of the rulers, raiding their establishments and driving off their cattle. And they, like the partisans and guerillas of later centuries, were supported by the ordinary Buryat tribesmen. In any Buryat village Bogachei could be certain of getting secret aid when he needed it. He made successful raids on Russian posts at Tunka, Belsk and as far as Irkutsk itself. Many another group of oppressed Buryats followed his example, so that the Tunka ranges became a danger spot near which Cossacks or noyons feared to go.

But these hardy, free rebels of the hills were only a symptom of the storm which was at that time brewing over all Buryatia and the whole Russian Far East. In 1695—two years after Bogachei began his career—large numbers of Buryats fled from the Balagansk district on the Angara in protest against the oppression of Kaftyrev, the Greek governor of Bratsk. In spring of the following year, 1696, a similar flight occurred from Verkholensk district on the Upper Lena. The storm now broke in general risings involving Krasnoyarsk, Ilimsk, Bratsk, Irkutsk, Trans-Baikal and the whole Far East. There was some attempt by the rebels to co-ordinate these various revolts; and the men of Bratsk, in later examination, cited the revolts of Trans-Baikal and Krasnoyarsk as their tactical examples.

Kaftyrev, governor of Bratsk, used his position, like all his predecessors—but perhaps with more zeal than most—to enrich himself. He sent great trading caravans to China

full of furs that he obtained from the Buryats and Evenki. He acted as usurious money-lender, used his powers as judge to exact fines for his own benefit, and resorted to plain robbery. To bring grist to his own mill, he would have his men throw contraband tobacco into a man's hut and then fine him for possessing the tobacco. He forced men's wives and daughters to satisfy his lust. Of the Russian inhabitants, those whom he oppressed most were the peasants, not a single one of whom was left without a grievance against him. The Buryats were simply treated as animals. Out of the common oppression a far-reaching united front of the oppressed was formed.

Matters came to a head in Bratsk on Epiphany Sunday, 1696, when according to custom all the Russian inhabitants gathered at the church to settle the affairs of the community (the "mir"). Earlier, word had been sent to the Buryats that the event was of importance, as steps were to be taken against Kaftyrev. Ten non-Christian Buryats actually came to this Christian festival in a Christian church! They were not noyons, but rank-and-file tribesmen who had in some way been appointed by the tribes to represent them. The "mir" began by declaring to Kaftyrev that they would no longer obey him because of his tyranny; whereupon Kaftyrev came to the church and laid about him. The "mir" retaliated. Russians and Buryats together passed a resolution:

"Nine Cossacks, three traders, four peasants, ten tribute-payers, with all the traders and peasants and Buryats of Bratsk declare to the Cossack captains M. Kirillov and D. Terentyev that they refuse obedience to the commander Christopher Kaftyrev on account of his taxations and outrages and ravagings and because he administered no justice; and in his place elect for the conduct of all State affairs in Bratsk the Cossack captains M. Kirillov and D. Terentyev aforesaid. And they, Kirillov and Terentyev, are to conduct

all State matters, and administer justice to all soldiers, traders, peasants and tribute-payers and have the guilty beaten. And the electors are to obey Kirillov and Terentyev in all State matters and questions of complaints, and the disobedient are to be punished. The electors are not to stand by any who disobey. And Kirillov and Terentyev are to care for this resolution and send a complaint (to Moscow) against Kaftyrev."<sup>1</sup>

The members of the "mir" made a demonstration within Bratsk Fort, marching round and shouting slogans, threatening Kaftyrev and his followers, and calling on all to join them. A delegation of four men went to Kaftyrev, delivered the official declaration of non-obedience and demanded that he immediately leave the fort and the governor's residence.

Kaftyrev was forced to do it. He did not leave the district (possibly he was forbidden to do so), but tried to send a message to the Yeniseisk governor. The "mir," however, was determined that their message, not Kaftyrev's, should reach the authorities first, and Kirillov and Terentyev ordered that no messenger from Kaftyrev was to be allowed to pass; and the message to Yeniseisk never got through. While the "resolution" was on its way to Moscow the administration of Bratsk went smoothly, with the Buryats and Evenki paying their tribute to the tsar's exchequer in Kirillov's and Terentyev's keeping. There was actually no question of treason to the tsar, nor could be in a front which included the Church-ridden peasants; the common enemy was Kaftyrev and his local administration only. It is true that one "left-wing" rebel said to Kaftyrev's face, "When the people hunger, the tsar is silent. When the people rise, the tsar is terrified." But even he meant the particular tsar of

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that whereas Russian official documents of the time refer to Buryats as "inozemtsy" (meaning "aliens" but with a contemptuous flavour like "nigger"), the "mir's" resolution calls them simply "tribute-paying people" ("yasachnye liudi").

the time—the idea of doing without a tsar altogether had never been suggested.

Another part of the general Siberian upheaval of this same year, 1696, was the revolt of the “Zamortsy,” the “men beyond the lake.” These were the Russians of Trans-Baikal who in the winter of 1695–96 became deeply discontented with the administration of the Irkutsk governor, Savelov. In the spring they formed a “pact of unity” to stand together in all things “as one man.” This revolt was well organised, and they quickly set about replacing hated officers and officials with men elected from their own ranks. By late spring, no one beyond Baikal obeyed Savelov’s orders. In March the rebels had a salutary campaign against those who were unwilling to join them, and then they set out westwards against Savelov himself, towards Irkutsk.

*En route*, they met a convoy of Buryat slaves belonging to Savelov who were being taken to Irkutsk. They killed the guards and freed the Buryats, who joined their ranks. Farther on they were joined by more slave and free Buryats coming from considerable distances—as far as Ilga down the Lena river. On 9th May they appeared before the walls of Irkutsk, numbering two hundred armed men—infantry, cavalry, archers and arquebusiers from various forts and posts. They shouted to the townspeople of Irkutsk to let them in and to overthrow the governor, Savelov. Comically enough, although the townsmen of wealthy Irkutsk were too alarmed by the wild looks of those backwoodsmen to open the gates, they nevertheless took the advice to depose Savelov and elect a new governor of their own!

In the conditions of those days the Siberian revolts could not reach a final victory; yet, because of the solidarity of the rank-and-file Russians with the rank-and-file Buryats against the administration, some considerable success was achieved. Moscow sent out a whole expedition, the heads

of which had full powers to resolve the disturbance—they were even given power to *execute the governors themselves without previously informing Moscow*, if they saw fit. The rebels were not against the tsar, so the authority of the tsar's investigators and adjudicators was quite unquestioned. Moreover, in the inquiry into the Bratsk rising the investigators openly sided with the rebels. Kaftyrev's chief lieutenant was imprisoned, and Kaftyrev himself was sentenced to be flogged and banished to Yakutsk to serve as a common soldier, while his wealth was all confiscated. A new governor was appointed, and the affair was closed. The Bratsk rebels were the most successful of all.

## THE OKA BURYAT PLOT OF 1767

AFTER THE BIG-SCALE revolt of Russians and Buryats of 1695-96, the Buryat-Mongols begin to disappear into the dim gloom of full colonial exploitation, from the dark mists of which only occasionally comes a fitful gleam of flame from the smouldering embers of the oppressed nation. Such a gleam shines out, if only dully, in 1706, when Moscow wrote to the governor of Irkutsk about a report that Buryats, Mongol émigrés and Evenki had large quantities of guns, powder and shot which they had bought and got by barter at Irkutsk. The governor was ordered strictly to forbid sale or exchange of such goods to the "natives," and to confiscate the arms and ammunition which they had already obtained.

But Moscow did not now fear a spontaneous rising by the Buryats, or by Buryats and local Russians combined. The administration was by this time in far too strong a position to fear that. What Moscow feared then, and for long after, was a plot engineered from outside—by the Chinese Imperial Government or by the Mongol khans.

The Buryats had originally been vassals of the Mongol khans. And the Mongol khans, to save themselves from the Oirat conqueror Galdan (at about the same time as the great Siberian revolt of 1695-6), accepted Chinese suzerainty. Thus, the Chinese Government felt they had some claim to the Buryats and Buryatia. So did the Mongol vassals of the Chinese emperor. And in any case the Chinese Government was no more averse to expanding its dominions than the Moscow Government. Despite various Russo-Chinese treaties determining the frontier, China continually intrigued within Russian territory and Russia continually

intrigued within Chinese territory. Indeed, during the career of Galdan, Moscow was intriguing at one and the same time with Galdan and with the khans, supporting each against the other.

It was in these conditions of mutual Russo-Chinese plotting and counter-plotting that in 1767 there was a plot on the river Oka, west of Lake Baikal, against the Russian colonisers, the story of which makes exciting reading even in the archaic Russian of the East Siberian archives. Here, among documents of the Ilmsk voyevoda's office, is one named "Secret orders on the sending to a remote place of the lama Danzhin in 1767."

The central figure, Gilun Novan Danzhin—a lama or priest of the Tibetan form of Buddhism, adopted as the official religion of Mongolia some time before—remains throughout the story a mysterious, shadowy personage. So secret are the documents that they give no details of who he was or how and when he came to Buryatia; they merely refer to him as a Mongol lama, "come from abroad," and are otherwise confined to the strictest and most detailed instructions of how to keep him under control. Great though the precautions taken were, they almost failed. The Russians treated Danzhin like a hot coal—they hardly dared hold him, yet dared not let him go. Whoever he was, he must have been a brave and resourceful man, with great knowledge of human nature and organising ability.

The first mention of him appears when he was sent to the governor of Irkutsk, with orders to send him on to a remote place where he could be kept under observation. He was to be kept in a Buryat "ulus" or encampment and never allowed away, and especially never permitted to see his brother who, equally secretly, was under arrest at Barguzin. Most important of all, there was to be no talk with him about the position within the country, and he was not to be allowed anywhere

near the frontier. The Russian authorities feared not only his excellent contacts both in Trans-Baikal and among the ruling circles of Mongolia, but still more his knowledge of the internal situation around Baikal, which would have been of great interest to the Mongol and Chinese rulers. Their fear is itself a comment on that internal situation.

Irkutsk quickly sent Danzhin on to Ilimsk, governor of which was then also ruler of Bratsk and the adjoining Buryat districts—600 kilometres by river from the frontier. This was a region where communications were very difficult through the thick jungle and treacherous swamps, and where the Buryat encampments were surrounded by numerous new villages and new settlements of Russian colonisers. These Russian newcomers in the Bratsk district (*volost*) outnumbered the Buryats already by more than ten to one. Moreover, the Buryats in this locality had made no move against the Russian administration for more than seventy years. Danzhin should be safely out of the way here.

In great secrecy he was brought to Ilimsk, and in equal secrecy was handed over in February to a Christian Buryat named Tyutyukov. This man was the "shulenga" or bailiff of the districts (*volosti*) of Upper Oka and Iya rivers. The old Buryat chiefs had by now disappeared, and the uluses were ruled by such shulengas appointed by the Russians. Tyutyukov was likewise instructed to keep strictest watch over Danzhin, and to see that he told nobody that he came from abroad; but he was also told to treat the lama well, do him no harm, and speak kindly to him. (The reason for such treatment, and for the fact that Danzhin was not simply quietly executed, is unknown.) Tyutyukov must report immediately and secretly if he suspected Danzhin of any attempt to escape, and put him under close arrest in chains. So they set off from Ilimsk, and Danzhin at once got busy.

On the road from Ilimsk Danzhin took pains to bear him-



self with great dignity and convey an impression of extraordinary importance. Tyutyukov, wretched petty administrator of a remote ulus in a remote province, and full of the secrecy of the whole affair and the importance in which the Russians evidently held his prisoner, would be a fairly easy victim. Moreover, he had been told not to let Danzhin out of his sight and at the same time to keep on friendly terms with him. Thus, when Danzhin began to unbend and appear to take him into his confidence, Tyutyukov was no doubt flattered.

Danzhin, perhaps, thereupon passed a few comments. He may have first remarked how the Russians were really rather poor administrators—they did not know properly how to organise a district. He may have gone on to remark the very large numbers of Russian colonisers, merchants, money-lenders and the like, and to discuss how the Buryats must have disliked losing the better pieces of land that had been theirs for generations. This must have touched the Buryat Tyutyukov to the quick. Perhaps Danzhin, as he felt more secure in his position, added that elsewhere cousins of the Buryats still remained in possession of the land and shulengas were honoured noblemen instead of mere bailiffs (while, no doubt, refraining from mentioning the disastrous effects on the Mongolian “arat” peasantry of Chinese money-lenders and merchants instead of Russian). Tyutyukov would listen eagerly. And when Danzhin maybe hinted that he had only to send word across the frontier to get armed help for any movement of the Buryats against the Russians, Tyutyukov did not put him in chains and report to Irkutsk, but asked how such word could be sent.

Whether this was the actual course of their relationship or not, by late March—only a month after Tyutyukov took Danzhin from Ilimsk—the pair had formed and put into operation a bold plan to draw a red herring across their trail. Tyutyukov,

by arrangement with Danzhin, did send a "speedy, secret report" to Ilimsk, to the effect that the lama was "creating an uproar" in the uluses, demanding from the Buryats rich food—"suet, lamb's meat, butter and milk for always." The impression created in Ilimsk by this message was that this was by no means so serious an "uproar" as they had half feared, that Tyutyukov was loyally carrying out his orders, and that Danzhin was making himself unpopular with the Buryats. This was just what Danzhin and Tyutyukov intended; nothing more was heard at Ilimsk and Irkutsk for three months.

Even before this report of Danzhin's "uproar," he and Tyutyukov had already begun to lay their foundations and gather their forces. Tyutyukov appointed as his "adjutants" in the plot a Christian Buryat named Mychikeyev and another, non-Christian, called Kapkara Kirengin. Under them were various others—Chyuchkin, Bodoroyev, Bogandai, Zoriny, Buimin and Buzui. Tyutyukov and Danzhin themselves toured the districts under Tyutyukov's control, while the others were sent into the neighbouring uluses to gain recruits to the secret movement.

The position of the Buryat tribesmen was bad, indeed desperate. Not only were they wretchedly poor, but their numbers had diminished while the Russians had increased manifold. It was painfully obvious to the miserable Buryats that they could do nothing by themselves against the Russians. But here was a man, on their side, who as everybody knew (Danzhin himself saw to that) was a highly important personage over the border in Mongolia—a close friend of the great and powerful khans. This was a different situation—here, perhaps, was hope for the Buryats.

So Danzhin dropped hints about sending for armed help from the khans. Whether he sent or really intended to send for it, whether he believed it would be given, whether in fact

it was given, is all uncertain. Probably Buryats recalled folklore stories of Mongol participation in the flights of Buryats to Mongolia in the days of "Bagaba Khan" (Pokhabov). But, later, witnesses including Mychikeyev and Tyutyukov told a Russian court of inquiry that the Buryats Bogandai, Zoriny, Buimin and Bodoroyev actually did cross the frontier and return with two hundred fully armed Mongols; that they came to the river Kada in June to await the moment for attack; and that a secret store of arms for the Buryats had been laid down on the river Teba. In any case, whether Danzhin sent word across the frontier or not, the belief that he had done so enormously encouraged the Buryats, and before long there were seventy-five recruits from Tyutyukov's own uluses of the Upper Oka and Iya, sixty from the Irkutsk region, 120 from the Uda, 150 from Tulunovsk and Ust-Udinsk. With these forces, plus 200 fully armed Mongol horsemen, and with a secret store of arms for the Buryats, a surprise attack and the annihilation of all Russians in and around Bratsk seemed possible. The day was fixed for St. Peter's Day, 29th June.

But on the day before, 28th June, Mychikeyev got drunk. While drunk he met two Russian peasants, brothers named Chyusovitin, and bragged to them: "You and all the Russians have only till to-morrow to live." The Chyusovitins, puzzled, called two more Russians, and they bound Mychikeyev up. Tyutyukov hurried up and tried to persuade the Russians to let the drunken man go, promising in return to buy them some wine. This convinced the Russians that Mychikeyev was not merely raving in drink, so they seized Tyutyukov and bound him as well. Then, carefully avoiding all Buryat camps, they took the captives by roundabout paths to Bratsk and told their story.

The Russian authorities acted with great speed, and immediately rounded up Danzhin without waiting for proof that

he was implicated. The whole conspiracy thereupon collapsed; a Buryat traitor gave the rest of the chief plotters away. Danzhin was tortured to find what he knew and what he had done, but he refused to speak and died in agony without having told.

## FURTHER COLONISATION

THE OKA PLOT of 1767 occurred seventy-one years after the general revolt of 1696 when Kaftyrev, governor of Bratsk, was deposed; and it is noticeable that the two events were very different in character and outcome. The earlier rising was accomplished by a united front of rank-and-file Buryats and rank-and-file Russian soldiers and peasants against the higher officials and governors; this rising was fairly successful. The later plot was by Buryats only (with a possible promise of help from Mongolia) against the whole Russian population; and this plot utterly failed.

The difference is an indication of the political and economic changes which had begun in those seventy years. In 1696 the Russian peasants were still not very numerous. They were themselves very poor pioneers from European Russia. They took no more land than they could till themselves; and since there was still plenty of land for every one, that meant no hardship for the Buryats. On the contrary, the Buryat herdsmen and the Russian peasants began a mutually beneficial trade, exchanging their respective products, which brought them into close and friendly contact with each other.

But by 1767 the picture had entirely changed. More and more land-hungry peasants had come from Russia, so that the Buryats had been squeezed out of many of their tribal pasture-lands. Moreover, of the original Russian settlers, some had waxed rich, others had become poorer still and had fallen into the position (demoralising to the land-proud old Russian peasant) of a mere agricultural labourer hiring himself out to the rich farmer, the "kulak." With the rise of such conditions there had also come a horde of get-rich-quick

traders and money-lenders, usually combined in the same persons. The kulaks, mainly original settlers, had most authority among the settlers as a whole. Kulaks, traders, money-lenders and administration, all not only robbed the Buryats and poorer Russians in every conceivable way, but also diverted the general wrath of the people by fostering an anti-Buryat chauvinism which sometimes resulted in "pogroms" as terrible as the notorious anti-Jewish outbreaks of Europe. In these circumstances any alliance between rank-and-file Buryats and Russians was quite impossible, and the idea of annihilating all the Russians of Bratsk, which would have seemed idiotic to their fathers, became attractive to the Buryats in 1767.

An example of the anti-Buryat chauvinism was given by the newspaper *Sibir* as late as 1876—over a century after Danzhin-lama's plot. It mentioned how some rich Russian kulaks seized two Buryats, locked them in a cold storage-room for the night, and in the morning demanded ransom in the shape of a bucket of wine from each. One of them could not pay, and the kulaks bound him to the shafts of a sleigh with a bag of oats round his neck. Beating him with the driving whip, they forced him to pull them round the village, stopping at every hut and bragging to everybody about their "horse." The newspaper commented that "had it not been for the fact that the peasants were afraid of the kulaks they would have set the Buryat free."

This chauvinism was the ideological reflection of the fact that Russian colonisation was becoming increasingly intense, and the economic position of the Buryats more acutely desperate. The Buryat noyons themselves made more and more use of Buryat slave-labour (in the form of bondage in "payment of debt"), while the Russian kulaks similarly held in bond both Buryats and impoverished Russians. The kulaks gradually seized the best lands, moving their boundary-posts

farther and farther into the grounds used by the Buryats. Thus the Buryats were forced out of the valleys of the big rivers like the Angara, Lena and Selenga; and many of them, indeed, migrated across Baikal to establish new Buryat ulus-encampments around Barguzin and on the Vitim plateau. One Buryat complaint of this squeezing-out process in 1703 reads:

"Nowadays, Your Majesty, the Selenginsk and Udinsk peasants and soldiery and officials of all kinds have seized our ancestral Kudurin steppes, our best pasture-lands, our winter and summer camping-places, our hunting grounds, the sheltered places in the lee of the woods, and have built themselves barns there for cultivating and growing corn. And from this their tilling and sowing we get nothing but ruin, so that we have had to sell our wives and children or give them into pledge while we ourselves wander from farm to farm and cannot pay our tribute."

(Sale of Buryat children through poverty to rich households was noted by the Irkutsk ecclesiastical authorities as late as 1877.)

Such complaints went straight into the waste-paper basket of Moscow, for the official policy was to encourage precisely this process of ousting the Buryats in favour of Russians. This was especially true respecting certain areas. In 1799 a decree was issued for the colonisation of the Ingoda valley, as a result of which within three years there was not a single Buryat left on the Ingoda; the Buryats were transferred to "lands suitable only for herding." By this means the Khori Buryats were artificially separated from their Aginsk brothers, and thus the Buryats were divided from each other "vertically" (that is geographically) as well as "horizontally" (into rich and poor).

The "horizontal" division became more acute with the development of trade and industry in Buryatia—though in-

dustry in fact never attained more than the lowest stages before the 1914 war. Goods entered the country from China through Kyakhta; and with the development of Eastern Siberia and Trans-Baikal as a jumping-off place in Moscow's plans to seize Manchuria, so there came to be built a number of roads, settlements, and mines for gold, copper, and graphite. The result was a growth of internal trade, which in turn caused a section of the Buryats to turn from herding to agriculture—especially in the western regions.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Trans-Siberian Railway was built, largely with a view to tsarism's imperialist designs on the north-eastern provinces of China. The line passed through the heart of Buryatia, entering up the Angara, passing round the south-eastern foot of Baikal, up the Selenga to Verkhne-Udinsk and then eastwards to Chita. Based on the railway and practically confined to the regions immediately adjoining it, capitalist industry began to spring up. These new factories, however, were only small and were technically very backward; there was still no incentive to spend money on the latest equipment, nor was it in accordance with tsarist policy that any considerable industrial area should arise anywhere but at the centre, around Moscow and St. Petersburg. The new industries of Buryatia were simply those which were necessary to fill the direct and indirect requirements of the railway. It was the same with the development of agriculture—it proceeded around the railway and served only the railway's needs; indeed, it far from satisfied them, and imports of food from Western Siberia and Manchuria increased while Buryat holdings of land and livestock catastrophically fell.

Among the new owners of factories were rich Buryats, most of whom were taishas or other nobles. They owned, for example, steam mills, wine distilleries and victualling establishments. These capitalist noyons continued loyally to serve tsardom, helping to put down any revolutionary movement



that might show itself (such as the revolt of Polish exiles in 1864). Meanwhile, at a time when the Church was remarking on the sale of children by poor Buryat parents, Buryat economy remained very primitive—especially in the east; and there were scarcely any Buryat industrial workers.

As soon as Buryats began to develop an area for agriculture, it tended to be taken away from them and given to Russian settlers. Between 1888 and 1917 the Western Buryats lost over three million acres (including undeveloped pasture-land). At the same time, as a result of the increasing difficulties of life, the Buryat population began to decline very steeply. The growth of population even in 1839–1858 had been very small—only 3.25 per 1000 of the population—but in 1859–1897 it was a mere 1.15 per 1000, while in the first two decades of this century the Western Buryat population dropped by the colossal amount of 12.7 per cent. Not much better was the position in Eastern Buryatia, where the population was more or less stabilised.

When an autocrat or an autocratic clique rules harshly in order to increase his or its own wealth and comfort, some kind of moral right so to rule must be impressed on the subject people. The autocrats have always claimed the “divine right of kings”; and the mass of the people has from time to time denied it and turned instead to a religion or philosophy more democratic in outlook or at any rate supporting them against the particular autocracy. Thus it was in Buryatia.

Tsardom made the most strenuous efforts to “convert” the Buryats to the Orthodox Church, the official Russian religion. If they could be brought into this Church, they could be threatened not only with fines and imprisonment but with Hell itself—or bribed with Heaven. As against this claim to Russian possession of the eternal souls as well as the bodies of the Buryats, two tendencies appeared. In Western Buryatia, the area first conquered by the Russians

and inhabited by the most primitive of the Buryat tribes, the religion opposing Christianity was—and remained up to some years ago—shamanism, the primitive “totem” nature-worship which had survived from the old days of democratic clan-society. In Eastern Buryatia, where the big development of horse-breeding and the absence of geographical barrier had favoured close relations between the Buryats and the Mongols, the religion opposing tsarist Christianity was the Buddhist lama church; it entered the country at the end of the seventeenth century from Mongolia, where it was the official religion, and the way the Buryats turned to it reflected the way in which, perhaps half unconsciously, they looked to Mongolia and their brother-Mongols for support against tsarism. Lamaism flourished in Eastern Buryatia.

But even in backward Western Buryatia the old democratic days of clan-society had passed, and shamanism was out of date. Built up to reflect a society of small, separate human units (the clan and family), the religion itself was in no way organised into a coherent whole. Its exponents were merely isolated medicine-men, magicians whose prowess enjoyed varying reputations. Its magic rites likewise were clan rather than national rites. But for the fact that it represented a philosophy opposed to that of the oppressors, and but for the extraordinary brutality with which Christianity was forced down the throats of the “natives,” it is likely that shamanism would have disappeared long ago through its inability to reflect a more developed and organised society. Even as it was, shamanism was so weak that by 1897 no less than 41·7 per cent. of the Western Buryats were Christian—that is, they had been baptized, though willingly or not was another matter; 47·7 per cent. remained shamanists, and 10·6 per cent. were Buddhists.

Church and State worked hand in hand to “convert” the Western Buryats. In the Irkutsk district (gubernia) a

regulation was issued that heads of clans would be recognised only if they became Christian. If any single member of a family was Christian, all the other members were forced to be baptized as well. Poor Buryats were bribed with offers of money, clothing or wine, and the rich were offered titles.

In 1891, Nicholas II, at that time the tsarevich (Crown Prince), travelled through Buryatia. During his passing visit the missionary post of Bokhansk alone baptized 297 Buryats. In the hope of reward in the shape of decorations, the church authorities thereupon began an intensive campaign to force the Buryats into the church. The police chief of Balagansk region (okrug) issued a circular calling for large numbers of "converts," and threatening punishment if they were not forthcoming. In the ensuing campaign twenty-six Buryats sent a complaint to the Ministry of Internal Affairs saying that the local Buryat noyons together with the Christian priests "fell on the abodes of non-baptized aliens day and night, and if they found anyone at home they simply baptized them by force there and then or dragged them off to baptism at the missionary post." Whoever resisted was beaten, tortured, bound and thrown into prison, and subjected to hunger and cold. Buryats fled into the forests, were hunted down and baptized.

Many other complaints were sent to Moscow to the same effect. Forty-one Buryats of Nygdyansk complained that the Balagansk police chief, the head of the local aliens' department named Etagorov, and a priest called Popov were binding Buryats with ropes and baptizing them. The signatories hid in the forest, but were caught. They were beaten up, bound hand and foot, and immersed in a vat, while Popov performed the baptismal rites alongside. At the door stood Cossacks with whips. The Kuitunsk Buryat, B. Botokov, resisting a similar baptism, was beaten to unconsciousness and baptized in that condition. In the Alar district a Buryat woman called

Shangina and her husband were baptized, and she was so severely beaten that she could never afterwards remember what happened. Another Buryat woman named Munkoyeva, after baptism, was left on the church floor covered with blood. As a result of complaints, the governor-general of Irkutsk was forced to issue an order to cease such practices. But the order was not put into effect, and was perhaps never intended to be. The St. Petersburg newspaper *Citizen* in 1892 referred to protests in the following simple words:

“Can a Buryat problem really exist? Is it not absurd in all respects? The Balagansk police chief accompanied the head of the mission on his rounds, and contributed not a little to persuading the Buryats to adopt the holy faith. It seems to us that by taking part the administration can strengthen the aliens’ weak will to do that which they should. They need something to arouse their determination to be baptized.”

The head taisha (ruler) of the Alar Buryats, named Batorov, participated with the administration and the Church in this campaign of baptism. Another taisha, Matkhanov, equipped a mission-post. As was noted by a St. Petersburg journalist named Stakheyev, “The Buryats only accepted Christianity because they thus ceased to be under the authority of their chief, the noyon. But when the noyon himself became Christian, he resumed his power over Christian Buryats and retained that over the non-Christian, whereupon the Buryats ceased to be baptized.” And, in fact, in 1905 began a mass movement of leaving the Church, as a protest against the Buryats’ general position.

In the early days of colonisation, the gaining of “converts” to Christianity was zealously pursued not so much in the interests of either religion or the State as for personal gain. The Christianised Buryats, baptized in groups tied to long poles and immersed in a pond, were sold as slaves. Monasteries gave them as presents, or received them from their

owners as pledge for a loan, or even forced the baptism of Buryat women in order to give them in marriage to the abbot's friends.

In Eastern Buryatia it was a different story. Here tsarism was unable to prevent the influx of lamas from Mongolia and the rapid growth of the Buddhist Church—though it took care to prevent it from spreading westwards. In 1741 there were 150 lamas in Eastern Buryatia, in 1848 there were 4546, and by 1916 there was the colossal number of 14,000; only 1.9 per cent. of the Eastern Buryats were non-Buddhist. After it became clear that tsarism could not prevent its growth, and after the period of anti-Buddhist policy during which the lama Danzhin hatched his Buryat plot of 1767, the tsarist administration adopted a reverse policy of using Buddhism for its own ends—as a lever in the continual intrigues between China and Russia. The tsar could not claim here to have both divine Christian authority and to be a reincarnation of the Living Buddha (although in remote Mongolian Turkestan he actually did!). But tsarism did tolerate and “protect” the lama church. And the lama church responded. The Buddhist bishops, abbots and priests, whose Church had flourished in Eastern Buryatia largely as an apparent weapon against tsarism and Christianity, betrayed their trust and preached humility, obedience to authority, and Heaven as recompense for earthly suffering—the greater the suffering, the better the place in Heaven. Though acknowledging the spiritual headship of the archbishop in Mongolia, the lama church became a political support of tsarism in Buryatia. In the 1914–1918 war the lama “bishops” Agvan-Dorzhiyev and Khambo-lama Itigelov appeared at the head of an “all-Buryat Committee for collecting gifts for war needs,” which in 1915 issued an appeal to the population in Buryat language to “explain the importance of the war for the people and the whole State.”

Unlike the shamans, the lamas were representatives of a well-organised church, with a network of monasteries, "schools" and "healing-places" all over the eastern regions of Buryatia. Most Buryat families were related to at least one lama. One result of this fact was that the lamas developed a single literary language for all these areas, whereas in Western Buryatia the various Buryat dialects remained various and became more and more secondary to Russian. The Buryats of Eastern Buryatia, if they used the theological language, all understood each other. Cultural life remained alive here and even developed when in the west it was confined to oral telling of folk-tales round the camp-fire. On this ground were able to grow the beginnings of a Buryat intelligentsia. But the literature that was written in the east was almost all religious. Only a few Buryats produced any non-Buddhist literature—such men as Khangalov, who collected and wrote down many invaluable Buryat legends, folk-tales and epic songs. Most of the efforts of the growing intelligentsia and progressives towards liberation from oppression were uninformed and vain. Thus the taisha of Barguzin with contempt noted that "some of our younger people are attempting to revive the old customs of the Zegeté-Aba"—the ancient communal hunt!

In any case the lama church could in no way be said to have benefited the Buryats. Not only did Buddhism continually strive to blind the people to the iniquities of tsardom (or at least to preach the wickedness of struggle against it), but the lama church itself added greatly to the Buryats' miseries. It had an enormous establishment in Eastern Buryatia which the Buryats had to support. By 1897 there were 44 lama monasteries. They were rich—twenty-five of them possessed 37,000 acres of land, and the buildings were magnificently equipped. The lamas and novices were about ten per cent. of the Buryat population in Trans-Baikal: every

nine men, women and children had to support one lama! The number dropped after the end of the last century, but even in 1916 they were over six per cent. of all Eastern Buryats.

The Buddhist "schools" were numerous, but were devoted to Buddhist theology and to Tibetan medicine, which was largely sheer magic. Moreover, the whole school course required from seven to fifteen years of study, which could be curtailed only by payment of considerable sums of money; clearly, the "degrees" given by such schools were open only to the richer students who could either pay these sums or be supported during their long studentship.

Apart from the lama "schools," education in Buryatia scarcely existed, especially for the Buryats. In 1870 there were fifteen elementary schools with 385 Buryat students. It was made extremely difficult for non-Christian Buryat children to obtain any education except that of the lamas; and the loss of labour-power involved was a further hindrance for all but the rich.

It is interesting that in the areas where the official policy of Russification was most strongly pursued, just there were the Buryats least educated. The Irkutsk Buryats in 1897 were only 5.2 per cent. literate (literate women were 0.8 per cent.); on the Upper Lena and Lower Uda literacy was 2.4 per cent. (men 4.3 and women 0.4); on the Lower Uda, indeed, where almost all the Buryats were Christian, literacy was the lowest, at 2.3 per cent. In Eastern Buryatia literacy rose to 8.4 per cent., mainly lamas; and of these literates, only 16.5 per cent. were literate in Russian—the rest in Mongolian and Tibetan.

The tsarist Minister of Education in a minute cited by Stepniak frankly averred that the aim of education of the "alien peoples" was to Russify them and merge them with the Russian people, and that this aim was to be achieved through education in the Russian language. And, in fact, apart from the Buddhist "schools," all education was carried

on exclusively in Russian. When a special Buryat deputation in the early 1870's asked for the establishment of schools for the study of Tibetan and Mongol languages, the Ministry termed the request "decidedly unsatisfactory."

In earlier years of colonisation the tsarist administration tried to adapt to its own purposes the traditional Buryat customs and administrative apparatus. However, after incidents such as Danzhin's plot in 1767, in which the official Buryat shulenga or bailiff figured as a leader, a new turn of policy was found necessary. In 1822 tsarism established a series of "steppe parliaments" headed by the taishas or Buryat overlords. These "parliaments" were supposed to be organs of tribal administration and justice, but in fact the taishas simply used them as a means of increasing their own power to exploit the population. At the end of the century the tendency towards Russification again became active, and the "steppe parliaments" were abolished, leaving only smaller "alien" offices (including a few clan administrations). Even these were suppressed in 1912, and replaced by open, direct, tsarist officials.

The total tsarist policy towards the Buryats is best summed up in the words of Kuropatkin, Minister of War, who while *en route* to the Far East in 1904 was approached by a Buryat delegation. "Bear in mind that if your people behave themselves badly, you will answer for it. If—which God forbid—your people think of taking any sort of liberties or of opposing the tsar's orders, then know that in a flash you will be wiped off the face of the earth. No trace will be left of you. See how many Russian troops are here; but they can become hundreds of thousands, and you would be immediately annihilated. You can demand nothing. You can only ask for mercy."



## REVOLUTION

IN THE 1890's a Russian traveller who visited Buryatia wrote: "When we had driven about five versts we met a Buryat seated on a cart which was loaded with bags of corn. The coachman, raising his whip, shouted, 'Get off the road, you vermin, or I'll thrash you.' At first the Buryat paid no attention to his bawling, but seeing that the coachman did not cease shouting and threatening with his whip he was forced to drive off the road, almost overturning his cart. The triumphant coachman jeered: 'Aha, so you did turn after all, vermin. You'd better know us baptized ones.'

"Turning to me, the coachman went on, 'These creatures, I may inform your worship, are becoming more cunning and bolder every year. Now they already say "No, no, the road by halves"; and it is rare that one of them will turn aside. But before, twenty or thirty years ago, as soon as they saw one of our baptized ones they'd abandon the cart with everything in it and take to their heels. Those were fine days! You needed some bread—you took one or two companions and set off to wait for a Buryat with bread. When you saw one coming you let him get close and then shouted, and the vermin would dash off as fast as his legs would carry him. You took the carts with bread as your own and went home with them. Next day, the vermin would come, bow, wallow at your feet. There would be no talk about the bread at all—all he wanted was to get back his horses. Well, you strutted over him as is proper for a baptized man over a vermin, and then you charged him three or four roubles for the horses, and the vermin didn't know how to thank you enough!'"

Towards the end of the last century the Buryat "vermin" did get "more cunning and bolder." The winds of revolt, which had been blowing round Europe during the nineteenth century, produced a breeze which drifted around Asia also. The "Decembrist" rebellion of nobles against the tsar had an effect in Siberia. Some of the best known Decembrists were exiled to Buryatia, especially to the Selenga valley. Some of these great-minded men from the metropolis, shocked by the conditions of life of the Buryats, made an intensive study of those conditions and of the Buryats' social structure, customs and economy. Such men were the Bestuzhev brothers and Torson. They travelled among the ulus encampments as far as the authorities permitted, inquiring and recording all they saw and heard. From their inquiries the Buryat national spirit was given an impetus; a new value was set by Buryats upon Buryat epics and culture and national life in general.

Even earlier than the Decembrists, however, there began to emerge from the Buryats a few outstanding personalities to represent, be it ever so weakly and vaguely, the strivings of the Buryat nationality. Such a one was Dorzhi Banzarov, son of a Buryat peasant family, who went through university, learning a number of European and Eastern languages. He became one of the world's authorities on Mongolia and the Mongols generally, and the Buryats in particular, writing a series of fundamental scientific works. One of his friends, P. S. Savelyev, wrote that Banzarov "was sympathetic to contemporary ideas, and took part in the life and movement of humanity." He appears to have belonged to the "Utopian Socialist" political school, and in 1848 wrote to his friend Bobrovnikov (the first Kalmuck scientist) on the French revolution, "They (the French) have driven out their khans and lords. Judging by the character of the present time, will not there again appear a Geser (a legendary

Mongolian hero)? In that event it will be the time for us to be his thirty-three champions."

A long line of political exiles flowed from Russia to Buryatia from the Decembrists onwards. More than 18,000 Poles, who had taken part in the 1863-64 Polish rebellion, were sent to Siberia, and seven hundred of them on the shores of Baikal staged one of the more memorable risings of tsarist days: the 1866 Trans-Baikal revolt. The plot was to disarm the soldiery along the road running round the foot of Baikal, strike towards Verkhne-Udinsk on the Selenga, raise the Buryats and other local population, try to liberate the political prisoners in the factories of Nerchinsk, and then make for China and the sea. On the evening of 24th June, 1866, the extreme western group at Kultuk (at the foot of Baikal) gave the signal by disarming the guard and setting off along the lake shore. The Poles took the lakeside villages and stations one after another until they reached beyond Mysovaya (where the railway now leaves the lake and turns south-eastward up the Selenga). On their way they seized carts, horses, arms, money and food, and destroyed the telegraph line and bridges.

The Irkutsk authorities, however, acted quickly. They sent 300 troops by steamer across Baikal, and several hundred Cossacks with two guns from Verkhne-Udinsk; more Cossacks followed, making altogether about 1500 men. Even 150 Buryats were mobilised under their noyons and some peasants, though these were not put in the front of the fighting.

The rebels lacked solidarity. Among them were some Polish nobles, and these refused to accept the orders of the leaders. As a result the main unit of rebels suffered a severe defeat at Mishikha, losing twenty killed and several dozen wounded and captured. The rest fled into the "taiga"—dense forest—as scattered groups. All routes from the

"taiga," especially towards the southern frontier, were guarded by the army, and by 25th July all the rebels had surrendered except for one group which later reached Kyakhta and was there captured on the frontier. Four leaders were publicly shot, two were sentenced to hard labour for life, and there were no less than 579 other sentences. The Buryat noyons who had mobilised their men were duly and richly rewarded, but the Buryats themselves did not forget the sharp, sudden human storm that had swept over Baikal.

After the Poles came Narodnik (Populist) exiles, and from the beginning of the twentieth century Bolsheviks of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. One of them was Stalin, who at the end of 1903 was exiled to the tiny Buryat village of Novaya Uda, eighty miles from the railway, where he was hospitably received and fed with home-made bread-cakes until in the next January he escaped. The Bolsheviks, unlike all other exiles, had a special message for the small nations oppressed by tsarism, and they took great pains to go into the Buryat uluses and tell the nomads about it. They spoke of internationalism instead of nationalism, brotherhood between nations instead of oppression and submission; they urged that the Buryats must have equal rights with the Russians. The Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1903 adopted a programme, clause 9 of which read: "The right of self-determination for all nations forming part of the state." This policy was, at that time, still not clearly worked out, however, and there was a division of opinion in the Social-Democratic Party on the point. But, even so, a few of the younger Buryats joined the Party, became Bolsheviks, found themselves accepted as equal comrades by Russian and other members of the Party, and told their friends so.

When, with Russia's defeat in the war against Japan, the

1905 Revolution flared out all over the vast empire, Buryatia and the Buryats were deeply involved. At first, before the rebellion broke out, there was a series of Buryat "congresses" of which the most important was at Chita in April, 1905. There were roughly three groups of opinion represented: what might be called the "Conservative"—representing the noyons and lamas who wanted the revival of the "steppe dumas" and complete preservation of all the old forms which guaranteed them their power and privileges; the "Liberals"—representing the growing Buryat richer peasantry and noyon-millowners, whose development the old forms of life hindered; and a third section of intelligentsia, which proposed to represent the Buryat masses but which, nevertheless, considered that the assimilation of the Buryats by the Russian nation was inevitable and desirable, and that to fight against it was futile and foolish. Nationalism was represented there with the idea of a "Pan-Mongol empire" to revive the glories of Chingis Khan, under the leadership of the noyons and lamas.

With the development of the Revolution at the end of 1905, however, the balance of ideas changed. When the news reached Buryatia of the revolutionary activities of the St. Petersburg workers, activity seized the railwaymen of Verkhne-Udinsk, the students of the Eastern Institute (temporarily removed there from Vladivostok), and the men of the two or three small factories in the town. In March the railwaymen put forward demands for fifty per cent. higher wages and lower food prices, in which they were joined by the local shop assistants. A Bolshevik newspaper, the *Trans-Baikal Worker*, appeared in Chita, and played a big part in organising the workers, appearing at first in legal form.

The authorities declared a "state of siege" in Trans-Baikal, but in October the workers began operating an

eight-hour working day, established joint workers' committees and then went on strike. In November, Verkhne-Udinsk entered the all-Russian post and telegraph strike. The students, now locked out of their Institute, were joined by many teachers. At the end of the year peasants of the lower Selenga came out with a demand that they be given full use of fisheries and lands owned by the Irkutsk and Chita monasteries. And wide masses of Buryats now took a line of action far removed from the attitude of any of the groups in the Buryat congresses: the Khori Buryats (East Baikal), for example, *de facto* seized the regional (volost) administrations, driving out the tsarist police and seizing for themselves lands belonging to priest, lama and tsar.

January, 1906, saw the peak of the movement, and tsarism struck back. Two trains carrying punitive expeditions travelled through the country, and many people were sentenced: thirty-one were shot in Verkhne-Udinsk, Mysovaya and Mozgon, sixty-three sent to hard labour, seventeen given other sentences. On 25th February at Verkhne-Udinsk railway station five men were hanged together. One rope broke and the victim fell to the ground still alive and was shot, bayoneted and clubbed till he lay still. The watching crowd protested, whereupon the soldiery fired into the people. A Buryat Bolshevik named Ranzhurov was sentenced to death, but was reprieved and sent to ten years' hard labour in the mines at Akatui. In later years Ranzhurov's life was valuable to the Buryats. The *Trans-Baikal Worker*, now illegal, published three more numbers before its print-shop was discovered and destroyed, whereupon it "temporarily died."

Between the 1905 Revolution and 1917 there was a great increase in the number of Bolsheviks exiled to Buryatia, and a great growth in the number of Buryat Bolsheviks. It was in this period that the Bolshevik policy on national

minorities became settled and began to appeal strongly to the great mass of the Buryats as of other small nations of the Russian Empire.

In 1912, Stalin, then in Vienna, wrote an article which explained in detail the Bolshevik policy on nationalities. The gist of that policy may be summed up thus:

Oppressed and subjugated nations strive for freedom and independence, free and independent nations strive for federation and mutual help. Every nation has the right to decide its own affairs, including secession or federation; but Social-Democrats serving the interests not of any nation but of the workers of every nation, do not necessarily support any nation's decision, including a decision for secession or federation. A nation is not free, and cannot decide its own affairs, unless it has full use of its own language, its own schools, etc. Autonomy, however, must be not on a national but on a territorial basis, because otherwise it is unreal and impracticable; and since in each autonomous region there are national minorities, these likewise must have their own language, schools, etc. "What solution would be most compatible with the interests of the toiling masses—autonomy, federation or separation? Conditions change, and a decision which is correct at one particular time may prove to be entirely unsuitable at another. . . . A state law based on complete democracy is required, prohibiting all national privileges without exception and all kinds of disabilities and restrictions on the rights of national minorities," wrote Stalin.

This was highly acceptable in the Buryat ulus, and the number of Buryat Bolsheviks up to 1917 grew.

With the abdication of the tsar in February, 1917, in Buryatia as all over Russia there arose the "dual power" of the capitalist Provisional Government on the one hand and the workers' Soviets (Councils) on the other. In Verkhne-

Udinsk the former was represented by the Committee of Social Organisations, the latter by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies headed by the Bolshevik Serov. The Soviet, whose influence extended throughout Eastern Buryatia, realised that a counter-revolution was impending and, to combat it, organised "Red Guards" and armed workers' units. While Kornilov, scarcely hindered by the Provisional Government, was preparing his counter-revolutionary plots against Moscow and Petrograd, the Verkhne-Udinsk "Committee of Social Organisations" was likewise preparing for the day when it could safely dispel the "illusions" of Russian workers and Buryat nomads about freedom and national equality.

The Buryat Bolsheviks were still only few in number. They were themselves mostly young, and their influence was mainly among the younger generation of Buryats. Great influence was still wielded in the ulus by Socialist-Revolutionaries and by propagandists of "Pan-Mongolism," who envisaged a sort of revival of the ancient Mongol Empire of Chingis Khan.

During the tense course of 1917 there were numerous Buryat Congresses, of which three (in Chita, at Goose Lake temple and in Verkhne-Udinsk) covered all Buryatia, east and west. The Chita Congress in early May put forward very mild demands for the establishment of a Buryat "duma" or "parliament" and certain educational and land reforms. The "Social-Revolutionaries" and "Mensheviks" (right-wing Social-Democrats) of the Committee of Social Organisations, however, strongly opposed even these trivial alleviations of the Buryats' lot. They need not have troubled; like people all over Russia, the Buryats were already taking matters into their own hands. Under the form of national "municipalities" and "rural councils" (zemstvos) there were arising "from nowhere" Buryat regional (volost) and



village self-administrations. These were not officially recognised, but, nevertheless, functioned: "possession is nine points of the law."

When the November 7th Revolution came and the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in Petrograd took power, the Verkhne-Udinsk "Committee of Social Organisations" disappeared and power in Buryatia passed to the Soviet.

The first All-Siberian Congress of Soviets in Irkutsk (29th October to 6th November), meeting actually before the Revolution in Petrograd, demanded that all power pass to the Soviets. A group of young tsarist officers in Irkutsk and Chita staged revolts against the Soviets in December and February but these were quickly put down.

Meanwhile the Buryat noyons and lamas, foreseeing the coming disappearance of the Provisional Government, began gathering their forces for a desperate struggle against the Buryat nation. Just before the Revolution they made contact with Ataman Semyonov, who was already preparing for the counter-revolutionary slaughter which later made him notorious. The noyons and lamas also tried to maintain their factual power over the Buryats by seizing the leading positions in the newly-appointed "municipalities" and "rural councils" where, however, they met strong opposition led by Buryat Bolsheviks. Soon after the November Revolution, on 11th-18th December, another Buryat Congress was held at Verkhne-Udinsk, at which the noyons and lamas were able to hold an "election" of a new "Bandido-Khambo-lama" (Buddhist archbishop) for all Eastern Siberia; and thus to reinforce the influence of lamaism.

The Bolsheviks' hand, however, had meanwhile been strengthened by the Soviet Government's "Declaration of Rights of the Nations of Russia," decreeing: (1) the equality and sovereignty of the nations of Russia; (2) their right to free self-determination including secession and the establishment

of an independent state; (3) abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions; (4) free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups. On 24th January, 1918, the Soviet Russian Republic was constituted "on the basis of a free union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics."

In early April, 1918, a Congress of representatives of workers, working peasants and Cossacks was held in Chita, which confirmed the passing of power to the Soviets. This Congress also recognised and confirmed the administrative, economic and cultural organs which had been established by the Buryats. Later that month a further Buryat Congress was held in Irkutsk. The differentiation in the ulus between noyon and lama on the one hand and the rank-and-file Buryats on the other had now gone further; some of the rank-and-file were beginning to realise how their old chiefs were holding them back and striving to maintain their ancient power. Relying on this wide realisation, the Buryat Bolsheviks were able to show up the noyons' representatives at the Irkutsk Congress, force a split and walk out with many followers—leaving the noyons' men "in a vacuum."

However, the Buryats had still much to learn about their noyons and lamas.

## COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION

THE 1917 REVOLUTION alarmed the reactionary forces of the world. Though Britain and Germany were still at war in the west, both made half-secret attacks on Soviet Russia, beginning with intrigues and slander and finishing with more or less open military intervention. Many other governments joined the British and German in this onslaught, among them the French, American and Japanese.

It may be said to have begun as early as April, 1918, when—using the old excuse that “disturbances were threatening the lives of foreigners”—British and Japanese troops landed at Vladivostok. At this time a Czech army, composed of former prisoners of war, was travelling eastwards along the Trans-Siberian Railway *en route* for Europe by way of Vladivostok. Units reaching Vladivostok were constantly told there was not yet any transport for them—and their officers did not seem perturbed about it.

In late May this Czech army suddenly seized the west Siberian part of the railway and in June, Czechs, British, Japanese and Russian counter-revolutionaries seized Vladivostok. The large Czech forces around Vladivostok began to return westwards, while more British and Japanese, and also French and American troops took their place. Local Soviets were suppressed all over Siberia. New “governments” were proclaimed at Samara, Omsk and Vladivostok, of which the Omsk one became the “official” centre—Samara having quickly fallen to the Red Army. In November the monarchist faction of the counter-revolutionaries seized the Omsk government, and Admiral Kolchak became

dictator. The Czech soldiery, who had hitherto been misled into believing that by attacking the Soviets they were defending democracy, now had their eyes opened; and their leaders were forced to withdraw and adopt a "neutral" position.

While the Japanese were offering Kolchak increased military assistance (in return for control of the Trans-Siberian Railway up to the Urals and special privileges in Siberia and North Manchuria), the British and Americans were as strenuously promising—and giving—even greater assistance to prevent Japan receiving such added strength. How far Kolchak had the support of the people may be judged by the admission of *The Times* special correspondent after visiting Omsk on 10th March, 1919: "Admiral Kolchak cannot do without the support of the Allies on the lines of communication. He owes much to the presence of Allied troops in the cities of Siberia." A *Manchester Guardian* correspondent wrote of the Russian White officers: "The majority of the officers had a rooted objection both to fighting and to working. They remained as far from the front as they could get. They 'wangled' staff jobs for themselves in Vladivostok and Omsk, frequented the restaurants in those towns, and the only martial ardour which they showed was exhibited in these restaurants when, late in the evening, they sometimes covered the members of the orchestra with their revolvers and made them play 'God Save the Tsar.'" As for the ranker soldiers, "the men did not want to fight, did not know why they were called on to fight, and were very doubtful of the use to which their victory, if they were finally victorious, would be put."

By March, 1919, there were 28,000 Japanese troops in Siberia out of a total of 118,000 foreign troops. Later the Japanese were increased to 75,000. The Japanese, with decades of experience of espionage in Mongolia and East

Siberia behind them, made especial use of such methods now. Not only did Ataman Semyonov become their paid agent. They also secured the assistance of the Buryat upper class: the noyons, the lamas, and that large element of the intelligentsia who came from the same privileged section. At Semyonov's headquarters in Manchuria Station was formed a "Buryat National Department," the duty of which was to seek out and betray the Buryat Bolsheviks and their closest sympathisers. It issued a call to "rally on the Japanese, Semyonov and Kolchak." A "Buryat National Committee" in Chita even organised Buryat military units for "self-defence" and "defence of religion and the national welfare," which Semyonov used as a reserve rearguard (in much the same way as the mobilised Buryats were used during the Baikal Polish rising of 1866). In February, 1919, the Japanese and Semyonov called a conference in Chita of representatives of the upper classes of Buryatia, Outer and Inner Mongolia, to consider a "Pan-Mongolian State" under Japanese "protection"; a "government" was established, consisting of noyons and khans, which never possessed an inch of territory.

The majority of the Buryats, led by the noyons and lamas and deceived by the grandiose, romantic talk of the "Pan-Mongolists," at first supported Semyonov's "Buryat National Committee" and "government." But they easily and quickly discovered how they could "rely" on the Japanese, Semyonov and Kolchak. When representatives of the "Buryat National Parliament" in 1919 asked Kolchak to confirm the local Buryat organs of self-administration, his simple reply was the order: "Have them thrashed." As for the Japanese, who took part in Kolchak's and Semyonov's "punitive expeditions," they were ever after remembered with horror. The *Manchester Guardian* correspondent mildly remarked: "Villages suspected of giving information to the

enemy were sometimes burned and all the inhabitants killed." This happened repeatedly in Buryatia: the Japanese burned Kharashibir, Peski, Old and New Zardama and many other villages. In Old Zardama forty-two houses were burned, in Kharashibir fifty-two. The defenceless population were shot, and their cattle and grain seized.

One of the worst acts of terror committed in this period was the massacre of Troitskosavsk Prison in December, 1919. In the course of a few days 1500 prisoners were slaughtered, only ten escaping. Some were cut to pieces with sabres, some bayoneted, some taken into the forest and shot in groups, whereupon the frenzied officers galloped their horses over the corpses. They entered the prison hospital, full of typhus cases, and shot the patients. The corpses of those killed in the forest, frozen in tremendous frost, were afterwards found bearing the facial expressions of their last moments. Some were in underclothes, some with one slipper on.

The terror, however, only roused the people of Buryatia to fury and determination: as when the Buryat Banzarakshiyev, before being shot at Dandyn ulus (January, 1920) shouted: "I am a Bolshevik. Kill me, and in my place will spring up dozens of fighters who will destroy you scum." The Buryats were learning the dearly-bought lesson of who were their friends and who their foes. The Bolshevik Party was growing in Buryatia by leaps and bounds throughout Kolchak's rule.

For example, a Jewish youth named Mosya Bronstein, of a very poor family, who was brought up in Chita. He was a fervent Zionist and Jewish nationalist, but in early 1918, when Soviet power was first established and counter-revolution was threatening, he had long talks with Bolsheviks on their differences with Zionism, and he became secretary of a People's Commissariat in Chita. When the Whites

attacked he was asked to fight, but was made editor of a Red Army newspaper and had to stay in Chita. When Chita fell, the train in which he was leaving was captured, but with some comrades he escaped into the taiga—forest. He soon returned to Chita to lead the youth movement and was mobilised by the Whites and sent to fight near Verkhne-Udinsk; on the way he was recognised but escaped again. For a while he returned to Zionism, but was unable to isolate himself from the fight and again approached the Bolsheviks. He remained with them throughout the rest of Kolchak's rule, and afterwards became a leading Bolshevik of Buryatia. A similar story could be told of many who in the period of most acute terror found their future path simplest to choose.

As early as April, 1919, *The Times* correspondent at Omsk reported that a Bolshevik plot had been discovered "with ramifications affecting railways and workshops throughout Siberia." From this time onwards the partisan movement began to grow rapidly throughout Siberia. On 15th July, 1919, Moscow radio reported that in Irkutsk region independent Bolshevik guerilla bands were operating in the Kirensk, Balagansk and Irkutsk sectors, with two regiments and some cavalry operating near the town of Irkutsk itself. "They make raids, destroying the railway, looting government institutions, attacking the militia and confiscating 'the property of the rich,'" reported *The Times*.

At that time these bands were in Kolchak's far rear. Yet a month later Kolchak issued a strong appeal for help—the Red Army had reached Tobolsk, and was beating him back along the whole front. Up to October, British and American supplies were rushed to him. Mr. Churchill later wrote (in *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*) that during 1919 "the total amount supplied to or carried in British vessels to the Siberian Armies amounted to nearly 100,000

tons of arms, ammunition, equipment and clothing." This flow of help, however, ceased when Kolchak's "government" evacuated Omsk in October. By that time his "territory" was little more than the railway—almost all Siberia from Irkutsk to Blagoveshchensk (over 1000 miles) was in the hands of the partisans, while Kolchak's own army was largely mutinous.

Towards the end of 1919 on both sides of Baikal the partisan movement took on a mass character, and great numbers of the population—Buryat and Russian—were drawn into it. The Czech soldiers along the railway and at Vladivostok were meanwhile clamouring more and more insistently to be sent home to Europe, and demanding to know why the long-promised transports still failed to appear at Vladivostok. They began to move eastwards again and concentrate round the seaport, and on 18th November Reuter reported that "the Allies' representatives have quelled an extensive revolutionary movement in Vladivostok, in which Gaida, the former Czech leader, was implicated. Gaida is said to have recommended the conclusion of an agreement with the Bolsheviks and the immediate formation of a Siberian Constituent Assembly. A similar movement on a smaller scale was suppressed at Irkutsk."

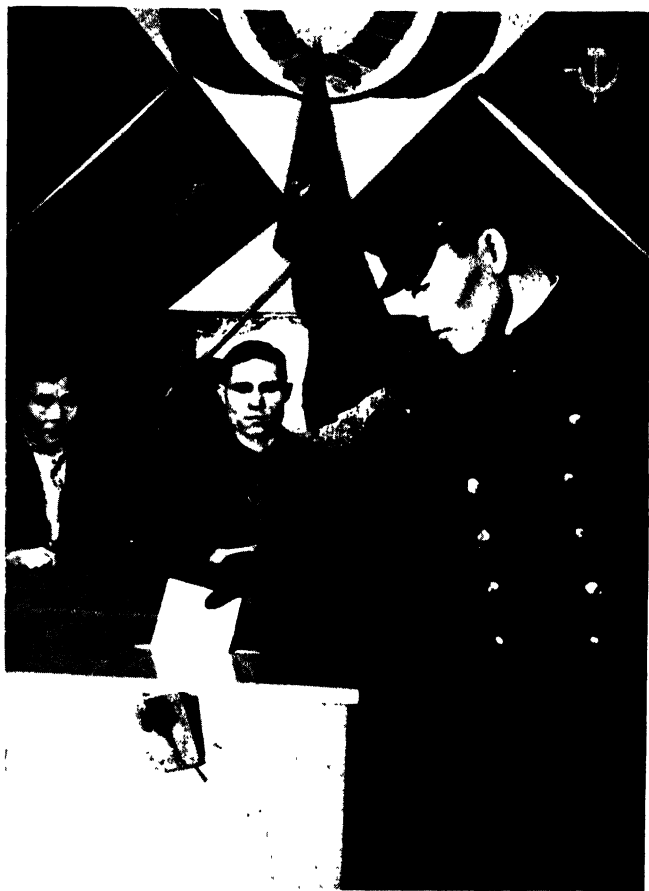
Precisely at this time—November and December, 1919—the Baikal partisans, now solid and multitudinous, were beginning to feel their strength. The partisan units, of which Buryat cavalry were among the most active and fearless, were led by Bolsheviks, who in turn were in contact with an underground district (guberniia) Bolshevik committee in Irkutsk. At the end of December a Buryat cavalry brigade commanded by Baltakhinov seized two points, Nelkhai and Kutulik, in Western Buryatia, extending their power in January along the Angara.

Kolchak, realising his growing weakness, began to "re-



organise" his "government," now at Krasnoyarsk. Before he could complete it one of his regiments at Novo-Nikolaevsk (now Novo-Sibirsk) mutinied, and the Red Army took it, advancing rapidly to deal Kolchak a shattering blow in a great battle east of Tomsk. On 27th December, Kolchak's "government," now at Irkutsk, was overpowered by revolutionaries while he was on his way there; at the same time Krasnoyarsk also fell, so he was trapped. At Nizhne-Udinsk his own personal bodyguard joined the revolutionaries but he took refuge in a train full of Czech troops and staff officers. While a general strike broke out at Vladivostok against Kolchak and the foreign occupation, Kolchak himself tried to reach the intermediate railway which was still held by Japanese and Americans. At each station revolutionaries demanded that the Czechs hand Kolchak over, and at Irkutsk on 15th January the train was surrounded by armed revolutionary soldiers with machine-guns. General Sirovy, commanding the Czechs, communicated with the French General Janin, head of the Siberian Allied forces (then at Verkhne-Udinsk), saying he dared no longer protect Kolchak or order his men to defend Kolchak's carriage. Janin reluctantly agreed that he be handed over to the "Political Centre" at Irkutsk, who, a few days later, contravening orders from Moscow, shot him and his "Prime Minister" Pepelayev.

The Russians and Buryats of East Buryatia meanwhile were not idle. In mid-December forty-two peasants seized Mukhorshibir while other units took Tarbagatai and Bichura, and by 21st December they held forty-two villages. On the shores of Baikal the Kabansk region (round the Selenga delta) and the Barguzin valley were cleared. The Czechs and Bolsheviks concluded an agreement and on 31st January, 1920, the revolutionaries seized Vladivostok. The Soviets began to appear again as if by magic all over Siberia. The



A Buryat-Mongol ship's captain votes in the elections to the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) of the Buryat-Mongolian Republic



In the winter of 1936/7 a group of Buryat girls went from their capital, Ulan-Udé, to Moscow on skis, covering 3,800 miles in 137 days. Above—Their reception in Moscow



The Evenki are the Buryat-Mongol's own "National minority." These are outstanding children of the Evenki boarding school at Dushkachansk. They are reading a book in their own language.

whole population seemed to move into action to clear out the Whiteguards and foreign troops: old men and women of Buryat ulus and Russian village, armed with sticks, scythes and pitchforks, attacked White encampments as if they were rubbish-heaps.

On 25th January a "Toilers' Congress" was held at Bichura, at which representatives of the Buryats were present, and which recognised the Russian Soviet Government and went on to elect a Central Executive Committee and General Staff for the Baikal area. Shortly afterwards another Congress was held of Buryats of the Khori aimak (the area east of Verkhne-Udinsk) with the members of the "Provisional Buryat Initiatory Committee" and representatives of the Uda-Ilka Military-Revolutionary Staff; this Congress affirmed its complete solidarity with the revolutionary Russian nation and the Buryats' adherence to their cause.

These two Congresses co-ordinated, regularised and organised the general rising, with the result that Troitskosavsk (close to Kyakhta, on the Mongolian frontier) on 19th February, and Verkhne-Udinsk itself on 2nd March were captured, partly by the partisans and partly by the Red Army advancing from the West. Almost all the rest of Eastern Siberia and the Far East was now quickly cleared, and the Whiteguards became reduced to mere gangs of bandits holding out in points close to the frontier, whence they could easily escape.

The danger of foreign counter-attack, however, was still great; and on Lenin's initiative the Soviet Government decided to establish an independent Far Eastern Republic to serve as a temporary "buffer state" which it would be more difficult for foreign aggressors to attack. This Far Eastern Republic, which was actually controlled by Bolsheviks, extended from Baikal eastwards to the Pacific Ocean.

However, how sorry was now the condition of the Russian Whites was indicated by *The Times* correspondent who, on 4th March, 1920, described the forces of General Voitsekhovsky and Ataman Semyonov—then still occupying a few stations in Trans-Baikalia. "Respecting the morale of these troops," wrote the correspondent, "all informants agree. Neither Semyonov's nor Voitsekhovsky's men display the slightest inclination to fight."

In August, General Ooi, commander of the Japanese Expeditionary Army, sent on the following telegram to Ataman Semyonov: "The Imperial Japanese Government has considered your request from all aspects. It thanks you and desires to maintain friendly relations, but the situation which is pressing us from many sides does not permit us to carry out your desire. The Government does not consider you sufficiently strong to be able to achieve the high aim which would assure the Japanese nation its great future. Your influence on the Russian nation is weakening every day, and the hate which the people feel for you is no support for our policy. The Imperial Japanese Government has sounded the Allied Governments on this question, but found a negative attitude on all sides. If you wish to pursue your aim in another direction [towards Mongolia?] we shall be very happy to give our support, but subject to those principles of which you are already aware. Our reply to your economic questions will also be sent very shortly; in this respect we can give you hope.—Minister of War, Tanaka."

Ataman Semyonov, then at Olovyannaya Station, was pressed alike by the Far Eastern Republic's army, by the Amur partisans, and by his own increasing lack of Japanese money. His position becoming desperate, he actually sent a note to the Soviet Government:

"Ataman Semyonov makes the following suggestion: The formation of a buffer state: He himself with his loyal units

to go into Mongolia and Manchuria and be supported there in arms and money by Soviet Russia on condition that his activities there be in the interests of Russia; he to be financed up to 100,000,000 yen in the first half-year with the duty of clearing Japan out of the continent and neighbouring independent Manchuria and Korea; trains of the Ataman and of Manchurian-Mongolian delegations to be given free passage on all Siberian and Russian railways." The Soviet Government laughed, but did not reply. Before long Semyonov disappeared from the scene into the arms of Japan.

The Whites made one more military throw. One of Semyonov's colleagues, the Baltic baron von Ungern-Sternberg, collected a force of Whiteguards, and with Japanese arms, money and "advisory officers" invaded Mongolia. Overthrowing the Chinese authorities, he seized the capital, Urga (now Ulan-Bator) in the spring of 1921, intending to rally his forces and strike northwards against Baikal and the Trans-Siberian Railway. However, his rule in Mongolia was so greedy and cruel that all the past centuries of Mongolian misery paled before it. Recalling the traditions of the 1911 Chinese Revolution, a group of Mongols headed by Suhé-Bator and Choi-Balsan organised a Mongolian People's Party, a Mongolian People's Provisional Government and a Mongolian People's Army, the main aims of which were to clear all invaders from Mongolia and establish friendly relations with Soviet Russia (the Soviet Government had already annulled all Russia's colonial privileges in Mongolia).

The People's movement rapidly gained strength, and Ungern-Sternberg, feeling the ground crumbling under him, crossed the Russian frontier in summer, 1921. But Buryat and Mongol cavalry and the Red Army at once met him and crushingly defeated him at Kyakhta, pursuing him into Mongolia where he and his band were soon annihilated.

In this great action the Buryat cavalry played a decisive part.

Tsarist Russia, the brass-bound boiler of nations, had burst at last by its internal pressure. Buryat-Mongolia, for the first time in three centuries, was free—free, though sadly wounded; its infant industry had been destroyed, its agriculture was ruined, its herds were a fraction of what they had been. The people of Buryatia had nothing but their own hands and the help of the Russian nation.

## SOVIET POLICY ON NATIONALITIES

WITH THE EXPLOSION of the Revolution, the vast tsarist empire flew into pieces. It was the Bolsheviks who had led and given expression to the desire of the oppressed nations for freedom; and, where socialism had control, the pieces—the newly freed nations—sought to come together again for added military and economic strength (pieces which, though Soviet in governmental system, had not yet adopted Socialism as the future path, such as Bokhara, were not fully admitted into the new confederation). Buryatia, the population of which had long been more than half Russian, of course remained Russian; but it was clearly understood that such territories were, nevertheless, to be given autonomy within Soviet Russia. Such was the process which went on in the first years of the Soviet Government's existence.

But the Soviet Government, beset on all sides by many pressing problems, was not able to give all of them the immediate attention that it wished. Stalin took pains to point out as early as October, 1920 (in *Pravda*), that "the administrative re-arrangement of Russia on the basis of Soviet autonomy had not yet been completed . . . the Buryats and others are awaiting a settlement of the question." And at the end of 1920 Stalin, as People's Commissar for Nationalities, put through the collegium of his commissariat a decision for the realisation of Buryat Soviet autonomy; the Soviet Government confirmed the resolution in 1921.

The time was still not ripe, however, for the "liquidation" of the Far Eastern Republic and the incorporation of its



territory in Soviet Russia. For this reason, at the end of 1921, a temporary arrangement was reached; in Soviet Siberia and in the Far Eastern Republic, almost simultaneously, two Buryat Autonomous Regions (oblasts) were formed. Correspondingly, the Buryat Bolsheviks were organised in "cells" which were attached to the Irkutsk and Trans-Baikal Communist Party organisations; the Irkutsk district (gubernia) Party Committee had a special Bureau for dealing with the Buryat Section of the Party.

In 1922, when the international situation was quietening down, the Far Eastern Republic entered Soviet Russia, and Stalin at once issued a directive for the unification of these two Autonomous Regions into a single Autonomous Republic. There were still certain difficulties to be overcome, but on 30th May, 1923, the Soviet Government supported Stalin's directive, and in June he sent a telegram authorising the organisation of the Republic out of the two Autonomous Regions plus the Baikal district (gubernia), all power to pass to the Revolutionary Committee of Buryatia on 1st August. By 4th December all was ready; and on that day, amidst scenes of great jollification, the First Congress of Soviets of the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic opened in the capital, Verkhne-Udinsk.

The question is often asked in European countries: "How autonomous is a Soviet Autonomous Republic?" This is a perfectly reasonable question, for Soviet autonomy neither looks nor is anything like the autonomy of small countries in the world outside the Soviet Union. To compare the autonomy of Buryat-Mongolia with the autonomy of Egypt, Portugal or Cuba is like comparing cheese with chalk. After the 1905 Revolution, and especially before and during the 1917 Revolution, Bolshevik policy on nationalities reached

full clarity, and it is necessary here to examine that policy.

In November, 1915, Lenin wrote: "This demand (for the right of nations to self-determination including secession) is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for the partition and for the formation of small states. . . . The more closely the democratic system of state approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will the striving for secession be in practice; for the advantages of large states, both from the point of view of economic progress and from the point of view of the interests of the masses, are beyond doubt. . . . The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present division of mankind into small states, and all-national isolation, not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them. . . . Mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transition period of complete liberation of all the oppressed nations, *i.e.* their freedom to secede."

In May, 1917 (after the tsar's abdication but before the Socialist Revolution), the Seventh Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (forerunner of the Bolshevik Party) adopted a resolution proposed by Stalin, which stated among other things:

"The right of all nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent states shall be recognised. To negate this right, or to fail to take measures guaranteeing its practical realisation, is equivalent to supporting a policy of seizure and annexation. . . .

"The Party demands wide regional autonomy, the abolition of tutelage from above, the abolition of a compulsory state language, and the determination of the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions by the local

population itself based on economic and social conditions, the national composition of the population, and so forth. . . .

"The Party demands that a fundamental law shall be embodied in the constitution nullifying all privileges enjoyed by all nations whatever and all violations of the rights of national minorities.

"The interests of the working class demand the amalgamation of the workers of all the nationalities of Russia into common proletarian organisations, political, trade union, co-operative, cultural, and so forth. Only such amalgamation of the workers of the various nationalities into common organisations will permit the proletariat to wage a successful struggle against international capital and bourgeois nationalism."

Speaking to this resolution, Stalin (a Caucasian) remarked : "I personally would be opposed to the secession of Trans-Caucasia, bearing in mind the general level of development in Trans-Caucasia and in Russia, the conditions of the struggle of the proletariat, and so forth. But if, nevertheless, the peoples of Trans-Caucasia were to demand secession, they would, of course, secede, and would not encounter opposition on our part. . . . I believe that now, after the overthrow of tsarism, nine-tenths of the peoples will not desire secession."

In his 1920 article Stalin pointed out that secession of the border regions would weaken the centre, while the small border regions would only fall into bondage to other countries. Therefore the Bolsheviks must oppose such a demand.

Stalin in the same article described how autonomy in the border regions was to be made real. "The proclamation of one form of Soviet autonomy or another, the enactment of corresponding decrees and ordinances, and even the

creation of governments in the border regions . . . are far from being all that is required to consolidate the alliance between the border regions and the centre." They must abolish "in actual fact and not in word" all the privileges of the colonisers, put universal education into effect, and recruit as far as possible from the local people the officials of the courts, administration, economic bodies, government bodies, and Communist Party organs. Local people must be drawn "into every sphere of administration of the country, including military formations, in order that the masses may see that the Soviet government and its organs are the products of their own efforts, the embodiment of their aspirations." Schools, courts, administration and government must be conducted in the local language. Because of the acute shortage of intellectuals in the border regions, "it would be unwise and harmful to alienate the all too few groups of native intellectuals, who perhaps would like to serve the masses of the people but are unable to do so, perhaps because, not being Communists, they believe themselves to be surrounded by an atmosphere of suspicion and are afraid of possible measures of repression." Finally he inveighed against "cavalry raids" to apply "pure communism" in the backward border regions.

In April, 1923, at the Twelfth Congress of the Party, Stalin pointed out that equality of legal status of the nationalities was "still a long way from true equality. . . . Apart from schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take every necessary measure to establish centres of industry in the border regions, in the Republics which are culturally backward . . . because they were formerly looked upon as sources of raw materials. . . . In this sphere serious work is required; and here talk of schools and language alone is not enough."

Finally, in this speech Stalin made a vehement and memorable protest against Great - Russian chauvinism. "Great-Power chauvinism is growing in our country daily and hourly—Great-Power chauvinism, the rankest kind of nationalism, which strives to obliterate all that is not Russian, to gather all the threads of administration into the hands of Russians and to crush everything that is not Russian. The chief danger is that such a policy involves the risk that the Russian proletariat may forfeit the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples, which it won in the days of the October Revolution, when the Russian proletarians overthrew the landlords and the Russian capitalists, when they, the Russian proletarians, smashed national oppression, evacuated the troops from Persia and Mongolia, proclaimed the independence of Finland and Armenia, and generally placed the national question on an entirely new basis.

"We may lose every shred of the confidence we gained at that time unless we arm ourselves against this new, I repeat, Great - Russian chauvinism which creeps along without face or form, insinuating itself drop by drop into the eyes and ears, drop by drop changing the mind and soul of our political workers, so that one can hardly recognise them. It is this danger, comrades, that we must lay at all costs; otherwise we run the risk of losing the confidence of the workers and peasants of the formerly oppressed peoples, we run the risk that the ties may be snapped between these peoples and the Russian proletariat. . . .

"Do not forget, comrades, that we advanced against Kerensky with flying colours and overthrew the Provisional Government partly because we were backed by the confidence of those oppressed peoples which were expecting liberation at the hands of the Russian proletarians. Do not

forget such reserves as those constituted by the oppressed peoples, who remain silent, but whose very silence exerts pressure and decides much. This is often not felt, but these peoples live, they exist, and they must not be forgotten. Yes, comrades, it is dangerous to forget them. Do not forget, if in the rear of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and Yudenich we had not had the so-called 'aliens,' the oppressed peoples, who disorganised the rear of these generals by their tacit sympathy for the Russian proletarians—comrades, this is a specific factor in our development, this tacit sympathy, which nobody hears or sees, but which decides everything—if it were not for this sympathy, we would not have nailed a single one of these generals.

"While we were advancing on them, their rear was disintegrating. Why? Because these generals depended on the colonising elements among the Cossacks, they held out to the oppressed peoples the prospect of further oppression, and the oppressed peoples were therefore forced into our arms, while we held aloft the banner of the liberation of these oppressed peoples. That is what decided the fate of these generals; those are the factors which, although they are obscured by the victories of our armies, in the long run decided everything. This must not be forgotten. That is why we must make an abrupt change of front in the sense of combating the new chauvinist tendencies and pillorying those bureaucrats in our institutions and those Party comrades who are forgetting one of our gains in the October Revolution, namely, the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples, a confidence we must cherish. . . . It must be understood that if a force like Great-Russian chauvinism begins to flourish and gets its way, farewell to the confidence of the formerly oppressed peoples; we shall never secure collaboration within

a single union, and we shall never have a Union of Republics."

On Stalin's initiative the Buryats and other small nations of the Soviet Union obtained guarantees of their equality even in the first Soviet Constitution. The biggest of these guarantees was the provision that the Central Executive Committee should have two equal Chambers: the Council of the Union (with members representing the whole country on a population basis) and the Council of Nationalities (to which each Union Republic or Autonomous S.S.R. appointed five delegates irrespective of its size). No law was valid without the approval of both Chambers, and the two Chambers joined equally in electing the two organs of government: the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, and the Council of People's Commissars. The representatives to the Chamber of Nationalities were appointed direct by the Congress of Soviets of the A.S.S.R. (such as Buryatia), while the members of the Chamber of the Union were elected by the Congress of Soviets of the whole U.S.S.R.; the A.S.S.R. Congress of Soviets sent its delegates on the basis of its population.

It was these guarantees that Buryatia received when it became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Buryatia's own Congress of Soviets was correspondingly composed of delegates from aimak (district) Soviets, and the latter from delegates of the Soviets of towns and villages (many of them purely Buryat). The basic Soviets were simply composed of delegates of industrial workers and of poor and middle peasantry. The Congress of Soviets of Buryatia appointed its own Central Executive Committee (on which were representatives of such local minorities as the Evenki), which in turn appointed its Presidium and its Council of People's Commissars.

Buryatia had its own People's Commissars for various

local affairs, some of which (such as finance) were subject to general supervision by Commissariats in Moscow while others were not. Naturally, throughout the U.S.S.R. such matters as Foreign Affairs, the Army, Foreign Trade, Post and Telegraphs and Transport were reserved to Commissariats of the U.S.S.R.



## THE REPUBLIC'S EARLY STRUGGLES

FINE WORDS BUTTER no parsnips; and Stalin often pointed out that formal liberty, independence and equality were of little value if they did not express a liberty, independence and equality of people in real day-to-day life, in work and in play. The peoples of the border regions of Russia had been for centuries oppressed, their language and culture forbidden; and while industry grew in the centre of the Empire, the border regions remained undeveloped, mere sources of raw material for industry and markets for industry's products. In these circumstances it was foolish to say that by the proclamation of national equality the Buryats thereby became, in real life, the equals of the Russians.

They were not. They were far more superstitious even than the Russian peasant, let alone the Russian industrial worker. They never washed from birth to death, or even took off their clothes; the lamas forbade it. They could read no writing, Russian or Mongol. They knew nothing of machinery. They had scarcely any music or art: the lamas forbade all acting and almost all music except in the Buddhist celebrations. They were riddled with disease, especially tuberculosis and syphilis—although their country has a curative climate like that of Switzerland. Compared with the people of Russia, the Buryats knew nothing and had nothing. The growth of life depends on the growth of knowledge and the ability to use it, and the Buryats lived far less than the Russians. They passed from birth to death through a miserable existence, but they did not understand their existence and could make little of it.

When, therefore, the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Republic

was formed at the end of 1923 it was—for the Buryats, though not for the Russians—partly only a formal change. Many Buryats simply did not know and could not understand that this was as much their Republic as the Russians', that it was they who must govern it and develop it—that in doing so they would be governing and developing themselves.

The Buryats had an idea of how to organise themselves and run their rude society locally; even for a period in tsarist times they had their "steppe dumas," an emasculated form of the tribal or clan conference of more ancient times. But they had little idea how to run a state, for they had never before been much more than slaves.

Naturally, therefore, at first the organisation of the Autonomous Republic was guided mainly by Russians of Buryatia. The form of the Republic provided the framework on which to build, but the building remained to be done. And the task confronting the new Republic was that of starting not from scratch but with a severe handicap; for in the Civil War the Whites and foreigners had ruined the whole economy of Buryatia—the Japanese in particular had removed wholesale as much of the products of the country as they could carry away.

During the civil war agriculture and herding had suffered under great difficulties, in addition to which there had been bad harvests in 1921 and 1922. At the time of the formation of the Republic the sown area in Buryatia was under two-thirds of what it had been in 1916-17; the head of livestock—the economic backbone of the country—had fallen by the same amount. There was no agricultural machinery at all. Syphilis in some parts reached the staggering figure of 45 per cent. of the population. Thanks to preliminary work by the earlier Buryat Autonomous Regions the position had been somewhat improved in some respects such as medicine

and education, but even so there were only twenty-three doctors (including two Buryats) in the whole country, and literacy was a mere 15 per cent.—and these Buryats were literate only in the difficult, inelastic Mongol script. In industry there were only sixteen small enterprises with 854 employees.

The first efforts made by the new-born Republic seem laughable when compared with the strides made every year now. But these first steps were those of the sorely wounded convalescent to whom every movement meant pain and expenditure of prodigious effort. For example, in the Republic's first year of existence its State Publishing House published only seven small booklets, of which three were in Buryat. Yet they were the very first Buryat publications which were not produced by the Buddhist Church; they were a wonderful achievement to the Buryats, they gave many a Buryat the first inkling of the idea that this was his State.

A triple programme was speedily undertaken: to resuscitate industry, to resuscitate agriculture, and to establish wide education. That meant to get back to the pre-war economic level and lay the foundations for development thereafter. It did not mean to introduce full socialism into the country at one bound. Indeed, this was the period of Lenin's "New Economic Policy," during which capitalism was allowed temporarily to return to Russia in a small measure in order to "give a breathing space" and restore trade—all, of course, under strict Soviet control.

Thus, during the period up to the First Five-Year Plan (begun in 1928), the general structure of Buryat economy was fundamentally little changed though the changes seemed large at the time. Trade remained to a great extent in private hands. The Buryats remained over 90 per cent. nomad or semi-nomad. Collectivisation of agriculture stayed



The herdsman of a Buryat-Mongol collective farm on the River Selenga



The "Chaban" or herdsman of "Bolshevik" collective farm.: The nomads are now settled, resulting in great increase of their herds



The reading-room of the Central Library in Ulan-Udé



Students of the Veterinary School of the Buryat-Mongol Republic

at an insignificant figure; it rose from twelve collective farms and 0.1 of the rural population in 1923-24 to eighty-nine farms and 1.0 per cent. of the population in 1928 (indication that while the collective farms multiplied, their average membership rose very little). Even these collective farms left the Buryat herdsmen untouched.

But during this period the sixteen factories of the country increased to twenty. Some of the sixteen had been so ruined by the civil war that they were now simply dismantled; others were reconstructed from top to bottom, enlarged and equipped with up-to-date machinery; others were entirely new to the country. The old sixteen factories had employed 854 workers and produced 2.6 million roubles' worth of goods yearly. The twenty new factories employed 1215 workers (nearly 50 per cent. more) and produced 6 million roubles annually (131 per cent. more)—a figure already above pre-war level. Including small factories, the total number of workers and clerks rose from 10,700 to 18,000. The first two dozen motor-cars appeared in the Republic in these years.

In agriculture, the sown area had dropped by over one-third between 1917 and 1923 to 453,400 acres. It now increased to 584,600 acres—and the proportion put down to wheat as against poorer crops rose from 13.6 to 17.7 per cent. During this period the primitive wooden "sokha" plough was being replaced by the modern plough, and notice was beginning to be taken of the methods of work of the first State farm established in the country. A tremendous revival of livestock herding—the fundamental activity of the Buryats—took place. In 1917 there were 2,125,000 head of stock, which fell by one-third to 1,405,000 during the civil war. Yet by 1927 it had reached 2,700,000 and next year passed the 3,000,000 mark—in five years the herds were more than doubled. The fisheries of Baikal revived, and

their production in 1928 was 36,000 centners compared with 18,100 in 1924.

With this rapid increase in production came a revival of trade. Total freight turnover in the Republic rose from about 200,000 tons per year to 341,000. Moreover, there was an extension in the interests of trade. The river-fleet on the Selenga, consisting of a mere couple of tugs and eight barges, was increased; and, in 1926, for the first time navigation commenced beyond the frontier into Mongolia, up the Selenga and its tributary the Orkhon to a point quite near Ulan-Bator—capital of the Mongolian People's Republic which had been established in 1924. At the same time the first few motor vehicles began to appear on the roads of Buryatia, though by 1928 there were still only 28 of them.

The improvements in education begun before the establishment of the Republic were carried forward. In 1923 Buryat literacy was 15·3 per cent. (among Buryat women 4·2 per cent.); this was raised by 1926—in only two years—to 27·5 per cent., and among Buryat women the proportion had been raised at a much higher rate to 11·0 per cent. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik leaders were dissatisfied with the rate of growth in education; the number of schools between 1923 and 1928 increased only from 485 to 510, and their pupils from about 20,000 to 29,400 (41 per cent. of all children); Buryat pupils increased from 7800 to 10,800 (40·8 per cent.). Moreover, the "new" schools were very often not new at all, but simply old and unsuitable buildings of various kinds taken over for the purpose.

This rate of educational development was not high enough, especially in view of the influx into the towns which now set in. Urban population in these years rose from 22,401 to 29,370; and it is interesting to see that whereas there

were only 28 Buryats living in the capital in 1923, by 1928 there were 1109 (3·4 per cent. of the population)—more than ever before in the history of the old fortress-town.

The revival of economy, however, was perhaps most sharply reflected in the "natural" growth of population (that is, excluding immigrants from outside the Republic). Here there was a sharp difference between Buryats and non-Buryats. The non-Buryat rate of growth increased from 20 per thousand in 1923 to 27 per thousand in 1928, while the Buryat rate grew from 4 per thousand to 11; in each case the Buryat figures were far below the non-Buryat—but the Buryat rate was increasing much faster than the non-Buryat. It is interesting to note that from 1921 to 1931 the average natural growth of population in India was 10·6 per thousand—so that the Buryats, who before the Revolution were actually declining in numbers, had caught up with India by 1928; it is still more surprising to note the growth figure for England and Wales (5·4 per thousand) while the populations of Scotland and Ireland were beginning to decline!

Economically, by 1928 Buryatia had caught up with and passed the pre-revolutionary level; culturally it had far surpassed that level; but politically things had not advanced so much. This was perhaps especially so in the countryside, where the great revival of agriculture and herding had also revived the richer section of peasantry—the "kulaks," Russian and Buryat. Thus the rich Buryats, numbering only one-twentieth of the Buryat population, now possessed a quarter of the herds (each rich Buryat thus having an average of 300 livestock or 1200 per family); the poor herdsmen, a quarter of the Buryat population, had less than a tenth of the livestock (four head each); and the poorest (the batrak), one-eighth of the population, had an eightieth of the livestock (one head of livestock each). Among the



Russian villages was a similar situation in possession of the fields. In each case, Russian and Buryat, far the largest and most important section was that of the "middle peasants"—over a half of the total; these possessed two-thirds of the cattle, a still higher proportion of the fields, and nearly three-quarters of the agricultural equipment and implements of the country.

What did this mean? It meant that the poorer peasantry, on whom the Bolsheviks and workers had so largely depended during the Revolution and Civil War, were beginning to think they were back where they were before. The newly-rich peasants thought the same, and treated the poor in the old way—hiring their labour, cheating them, getting them into debt, cornering the facilities, getting richer on the labour of the poorer. On the other hand, there was a great mass of peasants and herdsmen who were reasonably well off and satisfied. The problem—in Buryatia as throughout the Soviet Union—was: how to raise the poor peasants and herdsmen and the labourers to at least the level of the great "middle" bloc, and to abolish the small minority of rich men whose wealth and whose methods of exploitation threatened to destroy the Soviet's influence in the countryside.

The period that now began was that of the First Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union: a plan to cover in essentials the socialisation and industrialisation of the whole country, to make it possible for the Soviet Union to stand alone against attack from all comers, to withstand possible blockade, to provide an armaments industry, to make possible the development of the light industries which would produce everything from razor-blades to gramophone records, to raise the cultural standard and health of the people, and to socialise and develop rural economy.

The position of Buryatia in this gigantic plan was affected

by the international situation. South of Buryatia now lay the Mongolian People's Republic, a State independent of, but in close relation with, the Soviet Union. Of enormous area, this country stretched away far to the west and east of Buryatia, reaching on the east to Manchuria and on the south-east to Inner Mongolia and the approaches to Peking. This vast country had a population under a million; a people who only three years before, in 1924, had declared a Republic on the death of the last Khan-Bishop, Bogdo-Gegen, and who now declared themselves to be following a path of "non-capitalist development."

These people proclaimed their independence of anybody and their friendship for the Soviet Union, whose Red Army had helped them in their revolution and then withdrawn. But the Chinese Empire had never renounced its suzerainty over Mongolia; and although the question was for long periods diplomatically "buried," from time to time it cropped up as the occasion, rather than as the cause, of friction between the Soviet Union and China. China itself was the anarchic scene of operations of various "war-lords" out for loot and personal power, who were often Fascist-minded and always intending conquest at the same time as they were selling their country and themselves to imperial Japan. This was the period when Chinese militarists were preparing their 1929 attack on the Soviet-owned Chinese Eastern Railway which ran through Manchuria. Attack on the Soviet Far East by Chinese war-lords and Japan seemed a possibility of the near future. In the Mongolian People's Republic, though open foreign interference and influence had been destroyed, there were still very many foreign agents—mostly among the wealthier lamas and former khans whose position of privilege was being more and more restricted by the Mongolian People's Government.

The Soviet Union in these circumstances had to reckon

on the possibility of their Far Eastern territory becoming a theatre of war; in that event, or in the event of a counter-revolutionary upheaval in neighbouring Mongolia, they had to ensure a supply base, for which the herding plains and wheat-fields of Buryatia were the obvious choice.

On 27th May, 1929, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party put forward a programme for the socialist reconstruction of Buryatia's rural economy: the abolition of pre-revolutionary land-relationships (such as the former noyon's factual control of better pastures), facilitation of co-operative production by the poor and middle peasants and herdsmen, settlement of the nomads and semi-nomads, establishment of agronomic and technical bases, etc. The Central Committee criticised the local leadership for not having paid enough attention to the destruction of the power of the old noyons and rich peasants, and remarked: "Despite the great significance of herding in the national economy of the Buryat Republic, the predominance of nomad clan relationships right up to the present time has not been studied and finds no reflection in practical work in the way of settlement of nomads, transition to more cultural forms of life, operations against bondage under the kulaks, forms of collectivisation of the herdsmen."

Some initial mistakes were made in operating this programme. Instead of conducting propaganda among the Buryats and peasants, urging them themselves to displace the rich men of the ulus encampment and the village, the Bolsheviks of Buryatia sometimes adopted the "easier" method of what Stalin called the "cavalry raid"; the "propagandist" called a meeting of the ulus or village, slammed his revolver on the table and announced that the village or ulus was now "collectivised." It was duly registered as such, while the kulaks, lamas and noyons made full use of the material thus handed to them.

The result was that the number of registered collective farms rose quite satisfactorily, and the collectivised rural population increased from 4·2 per cent. of the whole in 1929 to a rosy 19·5 per cent. in 1930; but over the same period the number of livestock in Buryatia fell at catastrophic speed, until in three years two-thirds of the livestock had disappeared, and the livestock population was far below even the 1923 figure: cattle were being killed off wholesale—in Buryatia as throughout the Soviet Union, for in many places the same mistakes were made.

If the mistakes had been made deliberately by enemies within the Party and the Soviet apparatus, they could not have been more terribly effective. And in later years, when experience had shown how well concealed such enemies had been, many memories cast back to that period. Meanwhile, however, the Soviet Government took rapid measures to counteract the rot. The Central Committee of the Party issued an urgent warning that collective farms must be formed voluntarily, not by coercion; and that they must be only of the simplest type such as the peasants and herdsmen could readily understand. The warning was a double-edged sword: it enabled the genuine Bolsheviks in the countryside to correct their policy, and it enabled the peasants to show up those who coerced them so that they could be—and were—replaced.

Even so, the correction was brought to realisation later in Buryatia and some other outlying Eastern regions than in more central parts of the Soviet Union. In 1932, in Buryatia, there were now 1578 collective farms, covering almost two-thirds of the rural population: yet the head of livestock was still dropping. In order to turn the tide in these regions the Government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (one of the constituent Republics of the U.S.S.R. covering Buryatia) gave certain privileges

to collective farmers of the eastern regions, allowing them increased flocks and herds for their individual use apart from those of their collective farms. In 1933, on the tenth anniversary of the Buryat Republic, the Central Committee of the Party sent Buryatia a commemorative message which emphasised the necessity of converting Buryatia into "the most powerful livestock base in the East." The Government of the Soviet Union adopted a decision on the abolition of individual "cowlessness," and early in 1934 it granted further privileges to East Siberian collective farmers particularly affecting Buryatia; most of the Buryat aimaks were exempted from the State grain-tax, which in the other aimaks was lowered by one-third, while incomes were raised by between 10 and 30 per cent. In 1935 the Government of the Buryat Republic, with the approval of the Union Government, increased the amount of land which collective-farm families could have for their own use from two to two and a half acres, while their permitted herds were also increased.

These measures completely undid all the harm which over-zealous Bolsheviks and provocateurs had been able to do. The herdsman and peasant could now round on the lama, kulak or noyon and say, "Why should I not join the collective? It gets machinery and buildings while I have none. My family can have its own herds and land as well as a share in those of the collective. I would be a fool not to join." The head of livestock began rapidly to increase.

In settling the nomads, the Buryat and Union Governments subsidised newly-settled households and provided material for building new houses and sheds. The experience gained in settling the first households was studied and used. Medical authorities observed the influence of the new mode of life on health and on problems of

nutrition. Economically, settlement for the Buryats meant immediate reduction of the winter death-roll of livestock. Culturally, it meant that the Buryats themselves learned the use of soap, of newspapers, of clubs, of music, in that order.

## GROWTH

WHILE THE AGRICULTURE and herding of Buryatia had been going through this period of stress, industry had been going steadily forward with construction of great new factories and the extension of those built in the first year of the Republic. By the end of 1932, at the close of the First Five-Year Plan (which was completed in a little over four years) industrial production in Buryatia was 160 per cent. more than at the beginning of the Plan in 1928, and nearly four times as much as in the first year of the Republic's existence; this, moreover, in spite of the fact that there were only 46 per cent. more industrial workers than in 1928, showing a steep rise in productivity of labour. Total industrial wages were 80 per cent. above 1928; so that wages per worker (in "fixed" roubles, not in fluctuating values) had nearly doubled in the Plan period. Naturally, transport had likewise increased, and annual freight turnover of the Republic had more than doubled to 769,000 tons. Among the new plants constructed in the First Plan were the Verkhne-Udinsk mechanised foundry, the Klyuyevski sawmill (on Baikal), the Hoffman kiln of the Upper Beryozov brick factory (Verkhne-Udinsk), and the first section, producing 750 kilowatts, of the Verkhne-Udinsk power station.

This heavy rate of industrialisation, combined with the more unhappy conditions in the countryside, caused a big flow of population to the towns. The main urban centre, Verkhne-Udinsk, grew from 30,000 to 55,590; and the rate of inflow of Buryats was much higher than that of non-Buryats. In 1927 there were 1109 Buryats (3.4 per cent. of the population) in Verkhne-Udinsk; in 1932

there were 4690—8·4 per cent. These people were nomads, come to town for the first time to plunge into industry.

To keep pace with this development, three technical colleges had been established in Verkhne-Udinsk; zootechnical, teachers' training, and medical (producing "middle" medical personnel such as nurses, masseurs, etc.). The first secondary schools had been established even in the remote northern aimaks, where the children of the more primitive Evenki also were taught.

One big educational reform had been introduced in 1930: a new alphabet for the Buryat language. Up till then, teaching and literature had been in the Mongolian script (looking remarkably like rows of centipedes hanging on a wall) which might have been all right for prayers to the Living Buddha but was not much good for agronomy, zoology, meteorology and sociology. In this year Buryat was switched over to a new "Latinised" alphabet, written horizontally, in which scientific terms were easily written. It might have been thought more sensible, in view of the necessarily close contact between Buryats and Russians, to have adopted instead the Russian alphabet; but at that time such a choice might have been interpreted as a sign of "Great-Russian chauvinism," of the superiority and dominance of the Russians; so it was avoided, and although less convenient than the Russian, the new alphabet was a great help in the education of the nomads and, now, the former nomads.

Health continued to improve, and the rate of growth of the Buryat population by 1931 had reached 14·8 per thousand (again compared with 10·8 in India) while that of the whole population was the astonishing figure of 31·3 per thousand. Thus the Buryat rate was rapidly catching up with the general rate.



It was now, when the foundations of socialist prosperity in the country had been laid and life was turning the corner into smoother waters, that the long-frozen buds of Buryat culture began to thaw out. Some of the foremost Buryats turned their energies to this matter. One of these men was Tsydenzhapov, an actor who had studied his art in Moscow and Leningrad and now returned to his own people for inspiration. He gathered together a few companions, and in 1932 they began touring the Buryat uluses. At each ulus they would give a performance to the herdsmen; Tsydenzhapov himself would come forward now as poet, now as singer and musician, now as actor. Then they would call for performances by men and women of the ulus, and these performances were carefully noted and studied. Quite quickly the little troupe grew, gathering new members from all over Buryatia, until at the end of 1932 the Buryat-Mongolian Theatre was founded—the first in the people's history.

If the First Five-Year Plan had meant a great stride forward in most respects for Buryatia, the Second Plan (1933–37) meant a leap in every respect.

In agriculture, while livestock returned (by 1938) to the peak figure of 1928 (3,000,000 head), the harvest by 1935 was already 48 per cent. above 1923 and 72 per cent. above 1900; the quality of the harvests was greatly improved, wheat now being 31 per cent. of the whole. Total agricultural production in 1938 was 131,000,000 roubles (in "fixed" prices) compared with 38,500,000 at the beginning of the Second Plan. This was the success of collectivisation. By 1936 there were 1068 collective farms, covering 86·1 per cent. (and 90·8 per cent. in 1937) of all rural households. Individual farmers in 1936 controlled only 10·3 per cent. of the Republic's horses, 8·5 per cent. of the cattle, and 3 per cent. of the sown area. The collective farms were getting

bigger: in 1932 they averaged 42 households each, in 1934 70 households.

Industrially, in the Second Plan period Buryatia was invaded by the factory giants for which the Soviet Union was becoming famous. One of the biggest plants of the Union is the Railway Repair Works of Verkhne-Udinsk, construction of which began in 1932. This is a "combinat" of many different factories and machine-shops: the repair-works itself has locomotive-assembly, boiler, tender, truck-assembly, wheel, model, joinery, machine-repairing, instrument and smithy shops—each of them comprising a large factory; apart from these there are iron, steel and copper smelting works, a factory making 11,000,000 concrete bricks and ordinary bricks a year, a ferro-concrete works, compressor and gas-generating stations, and an electric power plant of 39,000 kilowatt (which not only supplies the combinat but is linked up with the regional supply in a "grid" system). The great works are spread over a wide area between the main Trans-Siberian line and the wooded hills to the north-east. The works were soon developed not merely to repair, but to build; and as early as April, 1938, it produced the first locomotive of the powerful "SO" type.

From all parts of Buryatia came new workers to this industrial giant, Russian peasants and Buryat herdsman. The housing problem was becoming very acute, and alongside the new factory, lying in the suburbs of Verkhne-Udinsk, a whole new town was built for a population of 50,000—three times as many as the population of pre-revolutionary Verkhne-Udinsk. The new town consists of blocks of concrete flats three to five storeys high. The first blocks were finished up on the hill above the old town in 1934. The contrast was sharp. The old town, lying along the banks of the Selenga and its tributary the Uda, consisted mainly

of old log-houses of the Russian style, such as a few years ago could still be seen in the outskirts of Moscow. They were unpainted and unbeautiful. At the extreme edge of the old town, on the river bank, were one or two houses built in Mongol style with curved roofs—these were the old houses of wealthier Buryats who had nevertheless not been permitted to live in the centre. The streets were mostly “paved” with deep sand in which children played. On a hot July day the atmosphere down there was sultry.

Up the hillside and across the railway, however, was a different scene altogether: clean white buildings with concrete pathways between; big, numerous, airy windows. Here the children, Buryat and Russian, played in the thick carpet of pine-needles on the edge of the forest. A clean, cool breeze blew up here and through a light blue haze one could look far to the south, to the hills that separated this country from Mongolia and China. The smell of the pines was all around.

Among these new blocks of flats were other concrete buildings, some finished, some rising from the ground, some still in the foundation stage. There was a secondary school with fifty big rooms, pillared cloisters, and an approach of wide steps; a theatre-club accommodating an audience of fifteen hundred; a hospital and several clinics. Around and among these buildings ran tree-lined boulevards and squares, leading up to a large and beautiful rest-park.

Rather than the housing estate of a great factory, it seemed almost like a holiday resort.

The works itself, at that time still not completed, was scheduled to employ 15,000 workers; and by 1935 there were twelve hundred Buryats alone, apart from Russians, working there. Moreover, they were not doing the “dirty

work"; many of them were lathe-operators, crane-operators, fitters; and a high proportion were "shock-workers" and "Stakhanovites"—outstandingly efficient, model workers.

Another great new industrial enterprise which sprang up during the Second Plan was the Djida wolfram combinat. Wolfram—tungsten ore—is essential to the electrical industry and for the production of high-grade steels. The richest beds of wolfram in the world were discovered at Djida (west of Kyakhta, on the borders of Mongolia) by a woman geologist named Besova only in 1933. By next year construction of the plant had begun, and from the new town by the Railway Repair Works of Verkhne-Udinsk one could look down and watch the countless lorries, laden with machines, crossing the temporary wooden bridge over the Uda and rattling off along the dusty road towards Mongolia, making for Djida. The remote mountain valley sprang suddenly to life. Steam excavators arrived to scoop up the wolfram-sands from the frozen ground, lorries to carry off the ore from the sorting-machines. Soon the original site of these sands, together with rich molybdenum ores, was found in Mount Khaltason, and the centre of operations moved there. The mountain, 5070 feet high, is intersected from top to bottom by broad seams of wolfram; galleries were driven in from all sides, making the mountain into a honeycomb. From the upper galleries the ore began to descend by chutes to the main gallery and its little railway, and thence to the concentration works. On the summit rose a compressor-station and a power-plant. At the foot of the mountain appeared a little town of 10,000 inhabitants, with three schools, hospital, club and baths.

Back in Verkhne-Udinsk, at the end of the Second Plan a great meat combinat began production. This includes a

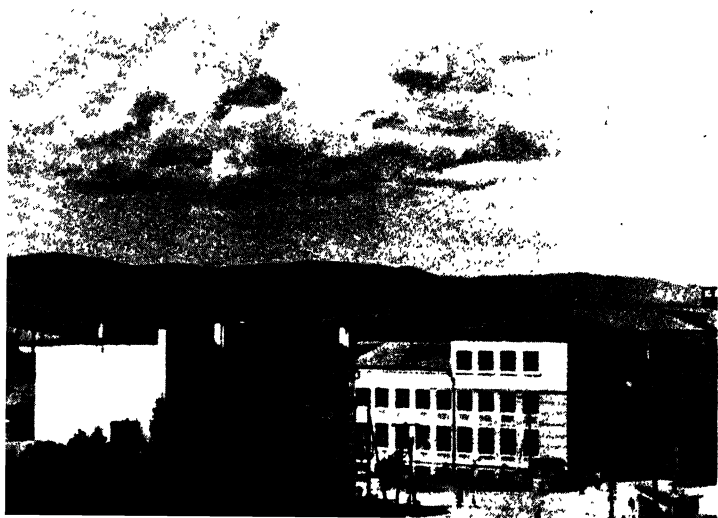
slaughterhouse and cold storage rooms; factories making sausage, soups, tinned meat and bacon; and shops for utilising by-products like fats, albumen, skins and bones. In twenty-four hours the combinat can deal with four hundred cattle, a thousand sheep and two hundred and fifty pigs. The Soviet Food Commissar Mikoyan remarked that this combinat "uses everything except the beast's last breath."

Other important factories of Buryatia, built or greatly enlarged during the Second Plan, were the Verkhne-Udinsk mechanised glass factory, a milling combinat in the same city, two mechanised bakeries, a big fish-canning factory at the mouth of the Barguzin river on Lake Baikal, four new saw-mills, three tin mines and a combinat of factories attached to one of them, and many others.

The name of the capital was changed in this period from the Russian "Verkhne-Udinsk" to the Buryat "Ulan-Udé." The streets and houses of Ulan-Udé now became lit by electric light. Cinemas opened, were enlarged, then rebuilt much bigger. A bus service began and expanded, a thousand motor-cars and myriads of lorries, motor-cycles and pedal-cycles appeared; more and more streets were properly paved. The city swelled and swelled, its population rising from 55,590 in 1932 to 117,800 in 1936, of whom one-fifth were Buryats. A clean water supply (unheard of in these parts) was constructed for the city. A telephone system was installed. A new concrete bridge was built over the river. Passenger ships sailed on the Selenga and on Baikal; the traffic grew enormously—from 5600 to 8900 on the Selenga alone between 1933 and 1934; there were 20,000 passengers on Baikal. New shipyards on Baikal and at Ulan-Udé built ships as fast as they could. Total freight turnover soared, and in three years doubled itself again to 1,593,000



A new nursery and infant-school at Djida, the great wolfram mine and refinery in the mountains of the Mongolian frontier





The children's Pioneer Palace in Ulan-Udé, where Buryat-Mongol and Russian boys and girls can play all kinds of games from making model aeroplanes to chess or leap-frog

tons in 1935. Total wages of industrial workers in the country rose by 63 per cent. in two years from 1932 to 1934.

In development of collectivised agriculture a great part was played by the Machine and Tractor Stations (M.T.S.) dotted about the countryside. The services of the equipment of these stations was available for hire to collective farms, but they meant much more than that. Attached to these stations were agronomists, veterinary surgeons, mechanics, architects and many other kinds of experts. In the height of the struggle for collectivisation they were also provided in 1933 with specially chosen Communists, organised in the "political departments," whose job it was to conduct propaganda among the peasants and nomads, deal with their difficulties, and expose attempts to coerce them. By 1936 the machines of these stations worked two-thirds of the sown area. There were 39 stations with 1683 tractors, 280 agricultural combines, as well as lorries and other equipment. Collectivisation in the period of the Second Plan was in the main completed; by 1937 it covered over 90 per cent. of all rural households.

Literacy became nearly general during the Second Plan, reaching 84 per cent. in 1937; Buryat literacy was nearly as high—80 per cent.; and in this respect the greatest achievement of all was the education of Buryat women, who even by 1935 were 58 per cent. literate. There were 711 elementary schools, and although too many of these were still small, unsuitable buildings which had been taken over from other purposes rather than specially built as schools, they contained 84,000 pupils—all the children of school age; half these schools were purely Buryat. In addition there were over a hundred secondary schools with 20,000 pupils, and there were nearly 30,000 infants in pre-school



kindergartens and crèches—most of these in the rural localities. Eight colleges, of which three were for the teaching profession, accommodated well over a thousand students. By 1935, twenty-five times as much was being spent on education (in “fixed” prices) as in 1923. In the last year of the Second Plan, 76 full-size books in Buryat were published compared with three pamphlets in the first year of the Republic—as well as nine non-Buryat books.

In the public library of Ulan-Udé at this time one could see young Buryats taking from the shelves books in Russian or Buryat on agronomy, mathematics, genetics, sociology, geography; *Othello* in Buryat; other works of Shakespeare, Dickens and Galsworthy in Russian.

A random illustration of the growing culture of the Buryats was a July night when a Moscow string quartet, occupying the “off” season by a tour westwards from Vladivostok, gave a concert of Beethoven and Borodin at Ulan-Udé. All tickets were sold weeks before, and the hall was packed about half with Buryats and half with Russians. The new Ulan-Udé radio-station relayed the concert, and loud-speakers in the main square of the town also carried the music out. In the dusk, around the high poles on which the loud-speakers were fastened, stood groups of listening men and women. Among them were some Mongols on horseback, delaying their journey southward towards the frontier in order to hear the music.

Another, more comic, illustration was a film at one of the Ulan-Udé cinemas. The film was undeniably old and bad, and half-way through it the Buryat audience arose, made for the box-office, demanded their money back and got it.

The Second Plan saw 40 hospitals in the Republic, with about 1700 beds; over 90 clinics; and many “health-posts.”

By 1935 there were 153 doctors (including 14 Buryats of whom some were women). Health resorts had been opened, and that at Arshan, where there are some of the world's richest mineral and radio-active springs, was attracting visitors from all over the Soviet Union.

## TRAITORS

THE CLOSE OF the Second Plan was felt throughout the Soviet Union to mark a period of fundamental change in the whole life of the country; not only the economic life, but the cultural and also the moral life. The peoples of Buryatia and of the Union seemed to heave a sigh at the end of the Plan as of satisfaction at the winning of a long, hard battle. Now was the time for celebration, for dressing of wounds.

In December, 1936, the new Constitution of the Soviet Union was adopted. This has often been described in detail, and here it is necessary only to note that it established equal and universal franchise and universal right of election to all Soviets from the highest—the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.—to the lowest; secret voting; and direct election to all Soviets. Previously town workers had received a higher proportion of representatives than the peasantry, voting had been open, and election to the higher Soviets was from the lower. This new Constitution represented an enormous widening of democracy corresponding to the final establishment of economic and political stability of the country.

In accordance with the new Union Constitution, in August, 1937, the Seventh Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of the Buryat Republic also adopted a new Constitution for Buryatia. This declared Buryatia a "Socialist State of workers and peasants," to whom all power belonged through their elected deputies. Its citizens, like those of all the U.S.S.R., were guaranteed rights: to work, recreation, education, sickness and old age insurance, inviolability of

the person and of dwelling, secrecy of the post, freedom of speech, of press, of meeting and demonstration. All male citizens were declared liable for military service. The supreme organ of State power was proclaimed the Supreme Soviet of Buryatia (elected by universal, direct and secret suffrage); this Supreme Soviet was to elect the Government—the Council of People's Commissars of Buryatia. State Departments of Buryatia included the State Planning Commission, and People's Commissariats of Food Industry, Light Industry, Timber Industry, Local Industry, Agriculture, Finance, Internal Trade, Public Welfare, Internal Affairs, Justice, Health, Education, and Social Insurance.

Buryatia being within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, its citizens elect deputies to the Supreme Soviet of this R.S.F.S.R. as well as to the Supreme Soviet of Buryatia. They do so on an equal basis with all other Autonomous Republics of the R.S.F.S.R. But they also elect deputies to the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.—the Chamber of the Union and the Chamber of Nationalities. Deputies to the former are elected, one for each 300,000 population: in the Chamber of Nationalities each Autonomous Republic, including Buryatia, has eleven deputies. All laws must be approved by both Chambers, and they both elect the Soviet Government.

How the new Constitution worked out in practice we shall see in considering the elections to the Supreme Soviets of Buryatia and of the R.S.F.S.R. At the moment, however, it should be noted that the elections to the first U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet were held in December, 1937 (ready for the first session in the following month), and were preceded by an intensive election campaign in every locality of the Soviet Union. With this, and with the last Congress of Soviets of Buryatia, which adopted the new Constitution, the latter end of 1937 was therefore a period of great political

activity in every town, village, Buryat and Russian collective farm. Propagandists (rather like election agents) were sent out from Moscow to all localities in preparation for the December elections, holding innumerable meetings in villages and towns to explain the new Constitution, to urge the people to use their new rights to the full, and to answer questions.

It was now that the policy of encouraging local education, cultural development and general initiative bore fruit. The propagandists sent from Moscow to Buryatia (and, it is worth noting, those sent to several other eastern National Republics) found themselves faced with some unexpected and remarkable questions. For example, Buryats would sometimes ask, "Is it true that Communism is the same thing as Buddhism?" And when the propagandist said it was not, he would be told, "That's what we thought too—but some of our new Buryat books say it is the same!" Sometimes he was asked such a question as, "Does the Soviet Government support the idea of a 'Great Mongolia' of Buryatia, Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and Kirghizia?"

Not only that, but the propagandists discovered that many people—collective farm meetings, local Soviets, local Communist Party branches, and other groups—had many complaints, some of them serious. When the propagandist asked, "Why did you not send this complaint to the Government or Commissariat in Ulan-Udé, or to the Regional Party Committee?" he would be told, "We did, but we heard nothing more." And if he said, "Then why did you not write to the press in Ulan-Udé?" the answer was, "We did, but *Buryat-Mongol Pravda* never published our letters."

Similar reports were received in Moscow from other eastern regions, and a rapid, urgent investigation was made.

In Buryatia and certain other areas such as Kirghizia (whose people are another branch of the Mongols) it was discovered that at the root of the confusion lay an idea of a "Great Mongolia," a sort of revival of the "Pan-Mongolism" propagated by the Japanese during their occupation of Siberia after the Revolution. While the Bolsheviks had nothing against the unification of the Mongols or any other peoples as an aim, they naturally opposed any Mongol "unification" into a second Manchukuo, a second puppet "empire" under Japanese imperialism, where the chief puppets would be feudal khans and abbots, where the herdsman would be tied to his lord as a serf, and where the Japanese would be in a far stronger position to invade the Soviet Union.

In the propagation of this "Pan-Mongolism" a great part had been played by the lamas, whose monasteries had lost their lands and privileges in Buryatia and were rapidly losing them in the Mongolian People's Republic. But they did not stop at that.

In one of the Buryat aimaks a group of lamas was discovered who had planned to blow up bridges in the neighbourhood. In a district near the frontier a group of kulaks and lamas had compiled a list of its "own" people whom it was trying to get elected as deputies to the local Soviet in July of 1937. A lama named Gurzhap Abushev arrived at the collective farm market of Ulan-Udé on the pretence of selling meat; in the bazaar he met a spy named Sanzhidayev and bought from him spoilt and lost Party membership cards, which the spying organisation was supplying to its members. Both these men were arrested in the act of the transaction; one Party card had been sold for 800 roubles.

By many different means lamas spread propaganda in favour of Japanese invasion of the Soviet Union. They energetically manufactured various "lunduns" or prophecies

about the coming "last days." One much-used lundun was the "lundun Molon-bakshi," recounting the omens of the approach of the "end of the world." Among these signs were the following: "An iron snake will encircle the earth," "Birds with iron noses will fly," and so on. All this, according to the lamas, must lead in the end to "the war when heretics will perish."

This propaganda reached its most outspoken form in the "teaching of Shambalyn-tserek," which was originally compiled by one of the lama sects in Tibet when this sect was being persecuted by others. The Buryat lamas took it out of their archives and utilised it against the Soviet power. The "teaching" was to the following effect: Somewhere (the lamas' geography did not say where) was a mythical country "Shambala," which was the protector of religion. It was governed one after another by a series of kings. During the reign of the king Eregdyn-Dagbo-Khan, there was upon the earth a great increase of sinfulness; "heretics and atheists" came to power, and "sincere Buddhists" were oppressed. Eregdyn thereupon sent his own armies to earth; after a bloody battle, the heretics and atheists were all destroyed, and once more the Buddhists prospered under the rule of the re-established kings.

In the temples of Khorinski aimak, in 1935-36, the lamas carried through a "Jud-hural"—a supplication to the king of Shambala to hasten his intervention in earthly affairs. The lamas painted pictures showing the armies of Shambala as coming from the rising sun, from the east—an indication of Japan, for in the original lundun they were supposed to come from the west. The lamas distributed lunduns propagandising Shambala. One such, distributed by a lama organisation in Buryat Mongolia in 1935, threatened "the wrath of Heaven" on all heretics and "enemy atheists," announcing that the "heavenly forces will defend only those

devoted to the work of God"; all others "will be destroyed by the anger of the gods"; "to save yourselves, pray to God and the lamas. Offer up prayers morning and evening. Organise the bringing of sacrifices to the lamas." And they prophesied that the armies of Shambala would come "quite soon."

Nothing had been done about these lamas and their propaganda. In fact, they received support in surprisingly high places. Thus books were published in Ulan-Udé in the Buryat language, arguing that good Buddhists were "real" Communists. "Translations" into Buryat of Marxist books were found to be completely distorted. The publishing house was full of men who had taken part in the Japanese adventures of 1920; and the man who put them there, named Lomozhapov, had been made secretary to the Government of Buryatia — on the recommendation of Yerbanov, the secretary of the Party in the Republic.

Another man, Ardin, had been four times thrown out of the Party by local Party groups (those in closest touch with the people) for wrecking; four times he had been reinstated by Yerbanov and finally appointed editor of the Buryat newspaper *Unen*. The head of the Institute of Culture, Bazaron, gathered together a staff which actually included two Mongol princes from Inner Mongolia and twenty other similar men; the funds of the Institute were used for financing wreckers in collective farms, on the railways and in the workshops. In the offices of the Russian-language paper *Buryat-Mongol Pravda* were more of the same type.

The Republic's finances were found to be in a bad state; many wreckers were discovered in the Finance Commissariat, all appointed by the Commissar; the same in the Internal Trade Commissariat. The Commissars were friends of the Party secretary, Yerbanov.



In agriculture, a bad state of affairs was found in two remote Buryat regions, which had always been cut off from the main territory of the Republic: the Aginski area in the east (close to Manchukuo) and the Alar area in the west. The Aginski area was particularly bad. Sowing here was the worst in the Republic, grain stores were lowest, livestock failed to increase. The secretary of the Party had been dismissed from another post for drunkenness. The local judge, Ilyin, had for weeks postponed trial of a man arrested for murdering a collective farmer, for months postponed trial of men who had stolen half a million roubles from a collective farm. In one collective farm was an organised band of seventeen men under a Japanese agent Sharapov, whom they got elected as chairman of the farm. Funds of farms, of the regional administration and of State farms were embezzled by all kinds of officials.

To "put matters right," Yerbanov sent to this region as local Party secretary one Polikarpov, who was later suspected of being in touch with the Japanese and was removed; but Yerbanov soon sent him back.

Yerbanov himself sometimes visited this territory: not, however, to investigate complaints, but—for hunting and drinking expeditions, for all the world like an old-time noyon. On one such expedition, drunk, he accidentally shot his companion Lyubarov—who was found to be an old Whiteguard.

Yerbanov tried to cover himself up by calling a Party meeting and making great play with "admissions" that he and the Regional Committee had "carelessly overlooked" the activities of the "Pan-Mongolists" and the wreckers. But the meeting passed a resolution pointing out that Yerbanov had made such "admissions" before, and nothing had been done about it. The game was up, and when he was arrested he confessed that he was in the pay of Japan.

On 26th September, 1937, the general meeting of the Party in Ulan-Udé reviewed his activities and emphasised the necessity of discovering all the men whom Yerbanov had placed in high positions. The same day, the Government of the Soviet Union announced the separation of the Aginski and Alar regions from Buryatia, and their incorporation as "national regions" within the Irkutsk and Chita districts (oblasts); an act generally recognised as a temporary emergency measure.

The trail in other eastern parts of the Soviet Union such as Kirghizia had led to similar high officials who admitted their connection with Japan. And just at this time the position in this respect was tricky. In July of that year, 1937, the Japan-China war had begun: the Japanese had attacked at Peking and rapidly advanced into Inner Mongolia. Here, on 28th October, they established one of their famous puppets—a "government of Inner Mongolia" under Prince Teh-Wang (one of their oldest agents) and several other khans. At the inauguration Teh-Wang frankly declared, "The Mongol people must be under Japan's leadership. They must resolutely go ahead and build up a new nation to help Asia to cast off the white man's yoke and resist Communism." The boundaries of this new "State" were deliberately left undefined.

There were, in fact, good grounds for believing that the "day of Shambala" had been intended to come fairly quickly. And it was due to the education of the minority nationalities, their growing realisation of their power, their understanding of who were their best friends, that Japan's agents were discovered in time. Yerbanov and his men had realised that the new Constitution, giving full rein to democracy, would mean the end of their privileges and power, and so they and their confederates in other republics had striven to wreck it. But the new Constitution itself had

caught up on them. The workers and peasants had caught them out. Large numbers of people who had applied to join the Party and whom Yerbanov's apparatus had rejected were now admitted. Others whom he had excluded were re-admitted.

## ELECTIONS

THE RESULT OF the discovery and punishment of Yerbanov's band was an extraordinary outburst of popular enthusiasm expressed in the elections. In March, 1938, the Government of Buryatia issued the election regulations, laying down the constituencies, defining the method of voting of travellers visiting the Republic or temporarily leaving it, and of sailors on the Selenga and Baikal fleets. For every constituency an "election commission" was appointed. The officials of these commissions (chairmen, vice-chairmen and secretaries) were composed of about 100 Buryats (including fifteen women) and about 160 non-Buryats (including ten women). In Djida aimak, Borgoi ward (inhabited mainly by Russians), the chairman and secretary were Buryats, the vice-chairman Russian, and the members were one Buryat man, one Buryat woman and four Russians. In Ubukun ward of Selenga aimak, on the other hand, the chairman was Russian, the vice-chairman and secretary Buryats, and the members were one Buryat woman, three Buryat men, and two Russians. These are typical examples.

"Agitators" began a propaganda campaign in every town, village and collective farm—prominent local men and women, often non-Communists. In Kabansk aimak alone, by 26th April there were 514 of these agitators, conducting 412 "circles" for the study of the election law and the new Constitution; in these Kabansk "circles" 10,487 electors including 2922 women were already regularly studying, and soon some of these electors themselves became agitators. In this way the campaign spread outwards from the innumerable original circles, until the whole population was drawn in.

A club of the Buryat Cavalry Brigade gave an example of the methods of the campaign. Here the walls were hung with photographs, statistical tables, graphs and maps showing the national areas of the R.S.F.S.R. Regular lectures were given here on the election law, explaining that all members of the forces had the vote and the right to be elected. The Brigade sent into villages a number of Young Communists—soldiers and officers—as agitators.

A great quantity of literature was printed in Russian and Buryat and sent out to the aimaks: 38,200 copies of the *Regulations on the elections to the R.S.F.S.R. Supreme Soviet*, 30,000 of *The Constitution of the Buryat Republic*, 102,000 of the *Regulations on the elections to the Supreme Soviet of Buryatia* (one for every fifth person of the population).

What were the agitators' meetings like? In the glass factory of Ulan-Udé, for example, the agitators were not merely asked about the elections. They were asked, "Why has Anthony Eden resigned?" (Mr. Eden had just resigned from the Foreign Secretaryship owing to Mr. Chamberlain's policy of friendship with Mussolini); or "How many days were Papanin's men on the ice-floe at the North Pole, and what scientific work did they do?" In Djida aimak collective farmers demanded to know the election system in England and other countries, why they had several political parties, and so on. They wanted explanations of events in China, Spain, Austria. The lot of the agitators was no bed of roses.

In a collective farm on the Uda river an old non-Party Buryat called Dambo Garmayev, aged sixty-five, was the first agitator, a member who consistently overfulfilled the farm's production norm, and who was well known to all the other members—a respected man. He began a study circle, telling the members of the farm in his picturesque imagery about the various clauses of the election law, with many an

illustration from life on their farm. Another agitator was the Buryat Tsyrenzhapov, a teacher at one of the new secondary schools, who conducted a circle in a Buryat collective farm. Eighteen Buryat men and women attended the circle.

Early in May the nominations began to appear. The first came from a general meeting of the workers at the great Ulan-Udé Railway Repair Works. This meeting proposed that Stalin and Kaganovitch (Railway Commissar) be asked to stand as candidates for the ward (Stalin later accepted). Three workers of the factory, including one woman, were also nominated. Meetings all over the country now met to nominate candidates. Some well-known people found themselves nominated for several constituencies, and thus on 24th May an "open letter" was published from five men—Ignatyev, Kovrigin, Tkachev, Belgayev and Ivanov, leaders of the Government or of the Party in the Republic—saying, "We have been informed from a series of factories, collective farms and meetings of electors in several constituencies of our nominations. While expressing our gratitude for these nominations we must state that, since we can only stand each for one constituency, we as Communists asked the Party Committee for their directive. The Party Committee advised us to withdraw our candidatures from other constituencies and stand as follows: Ignatyev, Kyakhta City ward; Kovrigin, Sheraldaiski ward of Mukhorshibir aimak; Tkachev, Zagansk ward, Bichura aimak; Belgayev, Novo-Selenginsk ward, Selenga aimak; Ivanov, Sosnovo Lake ward, Yeravninski aimak."

A typical nomination meeting was that at the Ulan-Udé meat combinat. Here the meeting was held in the workers' club of the factory. The chairman called "Elizabeth Tudatkhanova," and a little Buryat woman, aged thirty-one, got up with a puzzled look. She had no idea she was going to be nominated: indeed, she had promised a friend to go to

see the latest film in the town straight after the meeting. She was scared to be suddenly the centre of hundreds of eyes, though she knew them well. She controlled herself and walked to the platform.

"Comrades," said the chairman, "Elizabeth Tudatkhanova was born in the Buryat ulus Uleya, in Bokhan aimak. She came to our combinat as a charwoman. She was educated and trained here, her life began here in the shops of the combinat. She was the first to master our newest type of machine, the first to overfulfil the production norm. She is the editor of our wall-newspaper, the factory trade union organiser. Anyhow, comrades, you all know Liz Tudatkhanova well enough, you know what sort of woman she is." And the meeting loudly proclaimed its agreement. Elizabeth was tongue-tied. The chairman whispered, "Don't be confused, Elizabeth, don't be so modest—you deserve it." But she left the platform, her yellow Mongol face flushed, and fled from the room—nominated a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of Buryatia.

Tudatkhanova, the non-Party shock-worker of the sausage-making department of the meat combinat, was a typical candidate. Another Buryat woman nominee was Fekla Khakharkhayeva, prominent member of a Buryat collective farm; she was nominated at a general meeting of the farm. Elizabeth Badmazhapova, teacher at a Buryat secondary school, was nominated by the Buryat "Mani-Chaban" farm. A non-Party milkmaid named Erdyneyeva, who had gained much success with her methods of caring for cattle, was nominated by a farm other than that to which she belonged: she had visited it to teach her methods. The men—Russian and Buryat—nominees were similar local people, chosen by local people for their locally known worth. Few indeed are the Parliamentary candidates in western countries who enjoy such close contact with their constituents.



Yakut and Buryat deputies at the Supreme Soviet (Parliament) of the U.S.S.R.



Buryat-Mongol M.P.s' registering their attendance.





The House of Nationalities—one of the two equal Chambers of the Supreme Soviet or Parliament of the U.S.S.R. Buryat-Mongol M.P.'s are sitting in the fourth row

The election law of Buryatia was modelled on that of the Soviet Union as a whole. Thus all persons aged eighteen or over had the right to vote or to be elected, except lunatics or persons disfranchised by a law court in open session. No account was taken of nationality, way of life (nomad or settled), education, religion, sex, property, social origin or past activities. The kulak, the priest, the noyon and the lama could vote, and no one could prevent them from standing as candidates—if they could get some recognised organisation to propose them. Recognised organisations did not include churches or Buddhist monasteries, leagues of noyons or of kulaks, organisations of spies or wreckers. They did include all organisations of the Communist Party; all public associations such as sports societies, musical societies, literary and dramatic societies; all trade unions; all collective or State farms. Moreover, candidates could be nominated by the workers of any factory, or by the inhabitants of any locality. Organisations covering the whole Republic could nominate, and so could their local branches. In every case, nomination was by a general meeting, well advertised in advance, of all persons concerned: the members of the Party, the members of associations, the members of trade unions or collective farms, the workers of State farms, the workers of a factory or the inhabitants of a locality. Any person present at any such meeting could get up and propose any person as candidate; the meeting decided by resolution which of the persons named should be nominated as from that meeting; and the resolution then went to the constituency Election Commission to be registered. The Election Commission was bound to register the nominee as candidate unless it was found that he was a lunatic or had been disfranchised by a court, or that he declined to stand.

Thus the noyon or kulak might get his name put forward at a nomination meeting: but unless the public was con-

vinced that he was a genuinely reformed good citizen and indeed fit to represent them in the highest organ of power he stood no chance of getting any further than that. And, in fact, he knew that if his name were put forward at the meeting, it would only result in a searching criticism of his activities by those present; so usually he did not dare to take such a dangerous step.

Each candidate to be elected must receive not a proportional but an absolute majority, that is, he must receive more than fifty per cent. of all votes cast. Further, if less than half the electors in any constituency voted, the election there was invalidated and must be held again within a fortnight.

The election law clearly anticipated a multiplicity of candidates in individual constituencies. Thus clause 96 laid down: "If not one of the candidates in a constituency has obtained an absolute majority of the votes, the corresponding Constituency Election Commission shall report this to the Central Election Commission and shall simultaneously declare a new ballot between the two candidates who obtained the largest number of votes: this was to be held within a fortnight." In actual fact, however, this clause was rendered inoperative by the simple action of the electors and candidates themselves; for they so arranged it that there was never more than one candidate in any constituency. How did this happen?

Let us consider a single case typical of the whole. On 14th May a nomination meeting was held at the "Stalin" collective farm in the Ivolginski constituency. Sixty-two men and women of the farm attended and considered various names put forward, some of them prominent members of the farm itself. Then a farmer got up and proposed Olga Danilovna Inkeyeva, the thirty-year-old Buryat woman who headed the Culture and Education Department of the Party in the Republic. Inkeyeva was well known in Buryat

districts for her work in pushing Buryat education, drawing out talent in music, painting and drama from the uluses; and her nomination caught on. Other names were dropped, and the farm meeting put her name forward.

When the meeting's resolution was published in the Press, it caught the attention of those attending other nomination meetings in the constituency; and no less than ten of these other meetings passed resolutions supporting Inkeyeva's nomination and putting forward no other names. If other names had been adopted at other meetings (as occurred in some constituencies), the nominee who received most support would meet the other nominees, and an agreement would be reached as to which should stand; if no agreement was reached, then the electors who had put forward the less popular nominee would have a recall meeting and reconsider their choice. In this way, by the most democratic methods imaginable, the position was reached in which every constituency was a "walk-over" (though, no doubt, some day there will be a contest in Buryatia, since there is in fact no real hindrance to it, but merely no point in it).

It will, however, be remarked that a "walk-over" in the English style is impossible in Buryatia or anywhere in the Soviet Union. Even though there is only one candidate, he must be elected by the electors; and if he does not get the votes of fifty per cent. of the electors, he is not elected and the election must be held again. This situation also has never arisen in Buryatia. The people of the country took an enormous interest in this election. It was the first in Buryatia to be held under such completely democratic conditions; it was a reflection of their own rapidly-rising standard of living and of the rapidly-increasing social consciousness of the mass of individuals. Many complaints are made in Britain about the "apathy" of the electorate, who return Members of Parliament on the votes of, perhaps, only

thirty-five per cent. of the total electors; such an election would be not merely legally invalid in Buryatia, but would be a source of the deepest shame and would shock the whole country.

In fact, over ninety per cent. of the electors of Buryatia turned up to vote for their own candidates; men and women well known to them, generally from their own local ranks; not strangers thrust upon them who have to go round kissing the babies. And practically all who voted, voted for their candidates rather than against them.

The population of Buryatia is slightly less than half composed of Buryats. And of the sixty members elected to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic on 26th June, 1938, twenty-eight were Buryats and thirty-two non-Buryats (mostly Russians). But it is remarkable that while these deputies included only one non-Buryat woman, there were no less than eleven Buryat women—including three members of the Government.

## PRESENT AND FUTURE

THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT of Buryatia is bound up with its geographical position. To the west lies Western Siberia, where an enormous industrial growth has occurred and is continuing centred around the Kuznetsk-Magnitogorsk coal and steel combinat. To the east is the Far Eastern Region, where another complete new industrial base has been established. To the immediate north is one of the world's great gold-mining areas, the Vitim and Olekma basins. All these three areas look to Buryatia for supplies of various kinds of consumption goods, especially food (canned beef, bacon, sausages, tinned milk, butter, cheese, canned fish) and goods dependent on the food industry such as leather, footwear, cloth, soap; also goods from other local resources like glass, jewellery, matches and bottled mineral waters. But, more than all these articles, Buryatia, lying on the cross-roads of Northern Asia, has also to supply the needs of growing transport which in turn has to supply the growing needs of Buryatia.

The development of transport, indeed, has become especially urgent in view of the spread of war from Asia to Africa and then to Europe, with the rebound of the wave, showing in increasing tension, spreading out again to Asia. Many a great scheme which would have brought immediate improvement of living standards within the Soviet Union has had to be postponed in favour of other schemes designed to improve quickly the country's defences. One such enormous scheme which has had to be temporarily laid aside was that of the "Angarstroi": a colossal combinat of factories receiving their power from a

dam across the river Angara a little below its efflux from Baikal.

In this instance, however, the people of Buryatia nevertheless gain by the scheme to which energies were diverted from the Angara scheme. Instead of Angarstroi, a great new railway has been built—the Baikal-Amur line; this leaves the old Trans-Siberian railway east of Krasnoyarsk, skirts the northern end of Lake Baikal and continues eastward to cross the Lower Amur at the “Youth City” of Komsomolsk and emerges on the Pacific at the new port of Soviet Haven (between Vladivostok and the mouth of the Amur). Very little has been published about this railway for defence reasons; but as long ago as March, 1939, Molotov revealed that part of it would soon be working. A further railway was projected at that time to run along the shore of Baikal between the new Baikal-Amur and old Trans-Siberian lines, with a junction at Ulan-Udé.

The importance of this development will be realised in connection with the fact that in the course of 1938 another new railway was built from Ulan-Udé two hundred miles southward up the Selenga valley to Kyakhta on the Mongolian frontier—a point from which continuation of the line southward to the Mongol capital of Ulan-Bator would be easy and rapid. Strategically these lines are vital; but economically also they mean a great improvement of living standards for the local population. These lines are to be linked up with a through passenger and freight water-transport down the Selenga, across Baikal, down the Angara and down the Yenisei towards the new Arctic ports thousands of miles away; and with other steamer routes up Baikal and the rivers Barguzin and Upper Angara, the higher courses of which are to be deepened for navigation (for which purpose excavators are now being built in Ulan-Udé).

The new railway from Ulan-Udé to Kyakhta passes by

the shore of Goose Lake, an area with rich mineral resources which can now come into use. The railway itself uses Goose Lake coal, more of which is sent to Ulan-Udé or is used in new factories in a great chemical and metallurgical combinat, which makes use of underground gasification of coal (a new technique invented and developed in the Soviet Union which avoids mining and is far more economical and convenient). Some of this gas is also to be sent by pipe line to Ulan-Udé. Moreover, the gas supplies Buryatia with petrol and oil. A similar development of the rich natural gases of the Selenga valley and certain parts of the shore of Baikal is also being pressed forward.

Portland cement and asbestos piping are two more products beginning to appear in Buryatia and even to be "exported" to other regions. Bricks and glass are others. Materials for these exist in profusion in the Republic. Besides the wolfram of Djida, the Republic is using, working and "exporting" its own copper, mica, molybdenum, and many other valuable minerals and metals.

New resources are continually being discovered, especially since the Buryat Government recently established its own Exploration Board. An example of the danger and difficulty involved in these explorations was an expedition in 1938 in the Sayan range, on the south-western frontier of Buryatia. Twenty-two scientists set off under the guidance of a sixty-five-year-old hunter, Zubov, taking with them supplies and all kinds of scientific instruments. In July they were hampered in the heights by a big snow-fall, and had to make frequent halts for rest. They got behind schedule, and supplies ran short although they had covered only half their planned route. Having no radio, the party sent off their two most experienced men to fetch help; their boat was shattered on a rock and both were drowned. Continuing their scientific work, the rest of the party struggled on,



hungrier and hungrier, until they had passed the most difficult part. They began to fall ill, and after carrying the sick on stretchers for some distance the party pitched camp and began an intensive hunt for food. In this condition they were found by three gold-prospectors who had been sent out by aeroplane to find them. Help was brought, they recovered—and finished their route and their scientific task.

With the development of industry and agriculture has gone a further development of culture. Following the great success of the 1938 election campaign it became plain that the Buryats had no fear of Russian "over-lordship"; and at a linguistic conference in 1938 in Ulan-Udé it was urged that Buryat writing now be transferred to the Russian alphabet. This was done, with great benefit to the education of Buryats. At the same time, Russian experts, managers and engineers, brought into Buryatia during the First and Second Five-Year Plans, were instructed to learn Buryat.

In 1940 Buryatia showed to the Soviet Union its cultural achievements. A Buryat-Mongol theatre festival was held in Moscow in the autumn, when one of the capital's biggest theatres was given over for ten days to the Buryat theatre which Tsydenzhapov had established. The theatre was packed for every performance, and many columns of the newspapers were given over to describing the plays and operas presented.

One of the main items of repertoire was the opera *Enkhe-Bulat Bator*, written by the Buryat author Boldano from an old Buryat epic. The khan has two sons: the elder Tseren-Galdan, around whom the nobles gather, and the younger Shono-Bator, a popular hero. Through Tseren-Galdan's intrigues, Shono-Bator is imprisoned. A foreign khan sends a "present" of a great number of bows and arrows, which is interpreted as a declaration of war. The people are greatly agitated, and demand Shono-Bator's

release, to which his father agrees if he can draw one of the foreign khan's bows. The other nobles all fail, but Shono-Bator easily draws it.

The old khan, the nobles and Tseren-Galdan, all jealous of Shono-Bator's popularity, continue to persecute him even after his defeat of the foreign khan; and they exact new taxes from the people. So Shono-Bator eventually leads the people off to found a new kingdom on the shores of Baikal, where they defend themselves against Tseren-Galdan's attacks.

The music of *Enkhe-Bulat Bator* was written by Frolov, who took many of the single-voiced Buryat songs and converted them into harmony for the first time. The Buryat singers, who had never before known harmony, had to be taught to sing in this new way. The same with another opera *Bair*, with music by the Buryat Yampilov and libretto by Tsydenzhapov and Shadayev. Tsydenzhapov and his friend and colleague Boldano, who regularly play the parts of Othello and Iago in Buryat language back in Ulan-Udé, "went over big" with the Moscow crowds in the Buryat epics. The festival concluded with a concert of Buryat music and a Haydn symphony played by the Buryat-Mongol Philharmonic Orchestra on national instruments.

Let us take a look at the process of life in Buryatia, at the ways in which the people frame their desires and get things done.

An example of life in modern Buryatia is the "town improvement" campaign in Ulan-Udé in the spring of 1938. The housewives of the city may be said to have begun the agitation. It was taken up by a conference in March, when different people got up and put their views; many people criticised the City Public Services Department for lack of initiative and energy.

Letters were sent to the Press:

"The beautiful new House of Artists in Schmidt Street has a quadrangle full of piles of rubbish and dirty puddles. The House administration and the artistic inhabitants themselves are not interested. Under their very windows could be laid down fine flower-beds with seats for mothers. A large area could be covered with clean sand, available only two hundred yards away. It should not be difficult to find within the House artists to make sculptures for the gardens."

The head producer of the Russian Theatre, Itskov, wrote: "The city begins at the station. Gleaming with lights and full of comfort, the Moscow-Vladivostok express glides to a halt at the platform. Before you is the station of Ulan-Udé. A little narrow affair, a dim light. What a contrast! The capital of the Buryat-Mongol Republic must have a different sort of station—good-looking, well lit, well built."

A chauffeur: "The numbering of the houses must be put in order, and the roads in the centre should be asphalted. There are materials in the town."

A sanitary inspector: "Water supply remains unsatisfactory in Ulan-Udé. Many people still have to use unfiltered river-water. Another point—the condition of the public lavatories; there are far too few, and these are only rarely disinfected."

Another conference was held. Among the speakers was a housewife called Vereschagina, who said: "I will take the responsibility for seeing that this spring our quadrangle is planted with greenery and that flower-beds are laid out under our windows. I hope and believe all the housewives of our block will support me." Another housewife, Dimi-triyeva, said: "I have a son. A clever, jolly, blue-eyed little chap. In three months he will begin to walk. I'm looking forward to taking his hand and walking with him in the shady square. By that time we must have such a square.

But I shall only be in the square at week-ends, and what about on work-days? The kiddie has only one continual week-end. On my work-days my lad will play in our quadrangle. So we must make it into a little park. We housewives should get together on this. First we should get busy on greenifying the quadrangles of the blocks where we live. Let's make agreements for socialist competition on it."

Another housewife of Dimitriyeva's block went to see her, and together they called a meeting of all the housewives living there. They decided to build an "open-air play-house" for the children, with toys and play equipment for different ages: spades and shovels, wheel-barrows, chess and draughts, balls, archery bows, and a "maypole" or "giant strides" (such as is found in English playgrounds). Around the block they decided to make a rest-garden. The quadrangle was to have firs at the entrance and corners, bird - cherries, poplars, rowans and apple - trees, willow-bushes and a shrubbery.

An amateur gardener wrote to the papers to tell housewives what were the best sorts of flowers and shrubs for the climate of Ulan-Udé.

The plan for the "square"—a little park in the centre of the town—hung fire. The Public Services Department was so slow in laying on a water supply that the newly brought plants began to die. There was some difficulty, too, with hooligans. A party of young men and girls came to the square one evening to help in the work and three drunken hooligans with bottles in their pockets came and made nuisances of themselves; they were arrested but there was much indignation because the trio were tamely released next day scot-free.

In May an "open letter" was published to Ignatyev, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. from Buryatia, signed by two men and two women:

"In our two blocks of flats live 213 people. The area of our quadrangle is 7200 square metres. This big area is so far completely unused. A hundred and seventeen children live here. Of them fifty are under school age, yet we have no place specially equipped for them to play, nor a scrap of greenery. Thus even adult inhabitants prefer to stay indoors after work.

"We have set about preparing our quadrangle for planting and putting it in order. We asked an engineer, Semyonov, to help us, and he gave us gratis a draft plan, which we have approved at a general meeting of inhabitants. We have organised parties to do the work, which have begun to operate. The inhabitants have buried all the rubbish, laid sods to form a lawn and surrounded the garden with a hedge. The area has been divided up so as to form an excellent playground for infants, a sports ground for school-children and adults, and a big garden with lawns, flower-beds, seats, a reading-room and a green pavilion for billiards, chess and dominoes.

"We got from the Afforestation Department permits to take gratis four hundred trees and bushes of various kinds, while we also gave an order for forty poplars. In order to plant all these we must obtain and bring to the site at least three hundred cubic metres of proper soil. Transport of the trees and shrubs alone is only possible in lorries. At the very least we must make thirty journeys for the soil (in three-ton lorries) and as many again for the shrubs and trees, which are to be got from Berezovka and Middle Island.

"All the lorries which were set aside for free use in the town improvement campaign are in the hands of the head of the Public Services Department, Kasharov, who uses them entirely on other work. Thus all April not a single lorry did any work on town improvement. Our requests for

three to five lorries at each week-end are put off and put off. May is already passing, and in a few days it will be too late to transplant some of our trees and bushes. Yet Kasharov still gives us no transport.

"Comrade Ignatyev, we want to turn our living-place into a real socialist one. We ask you to see that the officials of the Public Services Department help us."

Ignatyev did see to it. Kasharov was dismissed; another conference was called of representatives of all interested organisations—street committees, committees of blocks and flats, factory committees and so on—and of the municipal departments; hindrances were quickly ventilated and removed; and by mid-summer the "square" had been completed, many little "parks" had been made around the blocks of flats, a large "park of culture and rest" had been laid out, and in many streets the roads had been asphalted and the pavements resurfaced ready for the Republic's Fifteenth Anniversary celebrations in the autumn.

Here are some brief reports which all appeared in the Buryat-Mongol newspapers in one week:

"Two hundred pigs of English breed have been bought in the Krasnoyarsk district by the Agriculture Commissariat of Buryat-Mongolia, to be imported for collective farms in Buryatia."

"The Local Industry Commissariat of Buryatia has assigned 8000 roubles to Yeravninsk aimak towards building a small brick factory in Ukyr village. It will supply bricks for building in the collective farms of the aimak, and will produce 200,000 bricks a year."

"At Spruce Lake the second round of the chess championship for Yeravninsk aimak has just been played."

"At the crossing of Stalin and Kirov Streets in Ulan-Udé, a lorry collided with a telegraph pole and was badly damaged. It was driven by driver Khogoyev of the Khorinsk Timber

Trust, who was driving carelessly. He has been debarred from driving for the next six months."

"The Khorinsk Public Services Department has been assigned 7000 roubles for dwelling-construction in the current year. At present the Department is building two villas."

"The 'Precision Instrument' shop in the last five months has sold forty-four motor-cycles, which are in demand by Ulan-Udé shock-workers and collective farmers in the Republic. The artisan Gorbul has bought one, and others have been bought by commanders of the Red Army."

"On 24th May, at noon, a mass race was held in the park of the Railway Repair Works new town. Twelve clubs took part, with 393 entrants. The 500 metres for women was a dead-heat between Yelbayeva (a Buryat) of the Agricultural School, and Kopaneva, of the 'Locomotive' club, at 1 minute 29 seconds. The men's 1000 metres was won by Spirin ('Locomotive') at 3 minutes 0.3 seconds."

"At Yezhov collective farm, in the Subukto-Kharyat (Buryat) district of Kyakhta aimak, they have begun to build a standard veterinary clinic. Total cost will be 32,965 roubles. The new animal clinic will begin work towards the end of the year."

"In the next few days the 'First of May' collective farm outside Ulan-Udé will bring to the town's market a large quantity of fresh fruit. The farm has agreed in addition to supply the shops of the Buryat-Mongol Trade Trust with 100,000 roubles' worth of fresh fruit."

. . . . .

So Buryatia grows, economically and culturally. Its people, one-time nomads, reach out and take for themselves the soap and Shakespeare, the gramophone and fresh fruit that

Western Europe has long known. More and more of the things which make life broader and fuller, more pleasant and more inspiring, become available to this little people in the heart of Asia as they go on from Socialism towards the full Communism which they still only dimly anticipate. Their life is easier now, immensely easier than in the bad old days when, crushed down under the dead weight of tsarism, they were beginning to disappear; but not only easier—their life is bigger, in every direction it reaches out further and further.

Many other peoples of Asia watch the changes in Buryatia with close attention. Miss O. Lang, in the authoritative American magazine *Pacific Affairs* (March, 1940), remarks:

“Education in Buryat-Mongolia may be compared with the provinces of India. In 1938, only about 9 per cent. of the (Indian) population over five years of age was able to read and write. Education was allotted 11.5 per cent. of the budgeted expenditure in the province of Bengal; 12.9 per cent. in Assam; 11.3 per cent. in the Central Provinces of Behar; 13.9 per cent. in the Punjab; 16.3 per cent. in Madras; 15.2 in Bombay (*Statesman's Year Book*, 1939). B. M. Tormogitov states that in 1931 Buryat Mongolia allotted 39 per cent. of its budgeted expenditure to public education.” Buryat is the official language of the Republic, and literacy is 90 per cent. Miss Lang mildly remarks, “The reorganisation of the life of the Buryats on Socialist lines naturally excites more interest and comment among other Mongols than similar changes in the cultural and economic life of the Russian population.”

‘Certainly the Socialist development of the Buryats is followed with the keenest attention by their kinsmen the Mongols of Outer Mongolia, who—at some distance behind—are following along what may be called a parallel path of



"non-capitalist development" with the economic help of the Soviet Union. But it does not stop there. The Mongols of Japanese-occupied Inner Mongolia, the Manchus under their Japanese puppet "emperor," the Koreans under direct Japanese colonial rule, all look to Buryatia as to an example that they, too, must one day follow.

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